Christian Forgery in Jewish Antiquities

Josephus Interrupted

Nicholas Peter Legh Allen

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It would do well to initiate this book with a declaration of sincere humility and an all-encompassing apology for any possible oversight as regards accountable academic rigour.

In this context, nothing that is contained in the following pages would have been even remotely possible without the enormous and tireless contributions made by the huge number of variously talented individuals over many centuries, some of whom will never be correctly acknowledged for their important contributions to this important debate. In this context, this study, which at best marks a small stage in an ever-continuing process of deliberation and review, belongs to them all.

With reference to McGarry (1955: 167) one may be reminded of the celebrated confession of Bernard of Chartres (active 1115–1124 C.E.) who was quoted, as far back as 1159, by John of Salisbury (c. 1120–1180 C.E.):

> Bernard of Chartres used to say that we are like dwarfs on the shoulders of giants, so that we can see more than they, and things at a greater distance, not by virtue of any sharpness of sight on our part, or any physical distinction, but because we are carried high and raised up by their giant size.

The number of individuals who played a vital role in this study are too numerous to mention without offending someone who might be inadvertently overlooked.

Thus, with great fear of oversight, I would like to draw attention to but a select few of the many, who each in their own way, contributed to the completion of this research project and have earned my most grateful appreciation:

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10th May 2020

ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations for Cited Biblical and Classical Works

The following abbreviations are employed for all cited Biblical/Scriptural and Classical Works. For the purposes of consistency and standardisation, all abbreviations of works and authors will follow, as closely as possible, a system originally proposed by Liddell and Scott[1].

Plato (c. 425–c. 347 B.C.E.)	
Abbreviation	Title of Work
Rep.	*Res Publica*
Lg.	*Leges*

***Philo Judaeus* a.k.a. Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 B.C.E.–c. 50 C.E.)**	
Abbreviation	Title of Work
DVM	*De Vita Mosis* (*Life of Moses*)
DLG	*De Legatione Ad Gaium* (*On the Embassy to Gaius*)

***Flavius Josephus* (37–c. 100 C.E.)**	
Abbreviation	Title of Work
Ant.	*Antiquitates Judaicae* (*Jewish Antiquities*)
TF	*Testimonium Flavianum* (*Jewish Antiquities*, 18, 3, 3 / 63–64)
JP	*James* (*The Just*) *Passage* (*Jewish Antiquities*, 20, 9, 1 / 197–203)
BP	(*John the*) *Baptist Passage* (*Jewish Antiquities*, 18, 5, 2 / 116–119)
War	*Bellum Judaicum* (*Judean War*)
C.Ap.	*Contra Apionem* (*Against Apion*)
Vit.	*Vita Iosephi* (*Life of Josephus*)

[1] Cf. Liddell and Scott. 1996. *Greek-English Lexicon*.

***Publius* or *Gaius Cornelius Tacitus* (c. 55–117 C.E.)**	
Abbreviation	Title of Work
An.	*Annales*

***Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus* a.k.a. Pliny the Younger (c. 62–c. 113 C.E.)**	
Abbreviation	Title of Work
Ep.	*Epistulae* (*Letters*)
HN	*Historia Naturalis* (*Natural History*)

***Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus* (c. 69–140 C.E.)**	
Abbreviation	Title of Work
DVC	*De Vita Caesarum* (*Lives of the Caesars*)

***Iustinus Philosophus* a.k.a. Justin Martyr (c. 100–163/167 C.E.)**	
Abbreviation	Title of Work
TID	*Tryphone Iudeo Dialogus*

***Hegesippus* (c. 110–180 C.E.)[2]**	
Abbreviation	Title of Work
Hypo.	*Hypomnemata*

***Lucianus Samosatensis* a.k.a. Lucian of Samosata (c. 125–after 180 C.E.)**	
Abbreviation	Title of Work
DMP	*De Morte Peregrini* (*Death of Peregrinus*)

***Titus Flavius Clemens* a.k.a. Clement (c. 150–c. 215 C.E.)**	
Abbreviation	Title of Work
Strom.	*Stromata* (*Patchwork*)

[2] There is some evidence that Hegesippus is not the actual name of the author of the now lost *Hypomnemata.* According to Kirby (2013), he may be associated with, Josephus in Alexandria and then corrupted to the name of Hegesippus in Caesarea. Regardless, his writings are only known to us through, inter alia, *Eusebius Pamphili*. Cf. Kirby. 2013. *Chasing Hegesippus* [Online]. Available: http://peterkirby.com/chasing-hegesippus.html [28 July 2014].

***Claudius or Lucius Cassius Dio Cocceianus* a.k.a. Dio (155–235 C.E.)**	
Abbreviation	Title of Work
HR	*Historia Romana*

Irenaeus (fl. 180–c. 202 C.E.)	
Abbreviation	Title of Work
Haer.	*Adversus Haereses* (*Against Heresies*)

Celsus the Platonist (Second century C.E.)	
Abbreviation	Title of Work
TW	*True Word*

***Tertullianus, Quintus Septimius Florens* (c. 160–c. 225 C.E.)**	
Abbreviation	Title of Work
Apol.	*Apologeticus* (*Tertullian's Defence of the Christians Against the Heathen*)
DPH	*De Praescriptione Haereticorum* (*Prescription against Heretics*)

***Origenes Adamantius* a.k.a. Origen (184/185–253/254 C.E.)**	
Abbreviation	Title of Work
Cels.	*Contra Celsum* (*Against Celsus*)
COM	Commentary on Matthew

***Gaius Valerius Galerius Maximinus Daia Augustus* (270–313 C.E.)**	
Abbreviation	Title of Work
Mem.	*Memoranda*

Eusebius Pamphili **a.k.a. Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 263–c. 339 C.E.)**	
Abbreviation	Title of Work
Hier.	*Adversus Hieroclem* (*Against Hierocles*)
Dem. ev.	*Demonstratio evangelica* (*Demonstration of the Gospel*)
Hist. eccl.	*Historia ecclesiastica* (*Ecclesiastical History*)
Praep. ev.	*Praeparatio evangelica* (*Preparation for the Gospel*)
Theoph.	*Theophania* (*Divine Manifestation*)

Scriptores Historiae Augustae **(284–337 C.E.)**	
Abbreviation	Title of Work
Hist. Aug.	*Historia Augusta (Augustan History)*

Sossianus Hierocles **(fl. 303 C.E.).**	
Abbreviation	Title of Work
Phil.	*Philalethes* (Lover of Truth).

Eusebius Sophronius Hieronymus **a.k.a. Jerome (c. 347–420 C.E.)**	
Abbreviation	Title of Work
DCP	*Dialogus Contra Pelagianos* (*Against Pelagius*)
DVI	*De Viris Illustribus* (*On Illustrious Men*)
Jer.Ep.	*Epistulae* (Various letters from *Jer.Ep.* I to *Jer.Ep.* CL.)

Paulus Orosius **(Fifth Century C.E.)**	
Abbreviation	Title of Work
HAP	*Historiarum Adversum Paganos Libri VII* (*Seven Books of History Against the Pagans*)

Georgius Syncellus **(fl. Eighth Century—died after 810 C.E.)**	
Abbreviation	Title of Work
Sync. Chron.	*Ecloga Chronographica*

Biblical/Scriptural Works	
Abbreviation	Title of Work
LXX	*Vetus Testamentum Graece Redditum*
MT	Masoretic Text (Hebrew Bible)
Isa	Isaiah
1 Kgs	1 Kings
Mal	Malachi
NT	*Novum Testamentum*
John	Gospel according to John
Luke	Gospel according to Luke
Mark	Gospel according to Mark
Matt	Gospel according to Matthew
Acts	Acts of the Apostles
1 Cor	1st Epistle to the Corinthians
Gal	Epistle to the Galatians
Jas	Epistle of James
Phlm	Epistle to Philemon
Gos. Thom.	*Gospel of Thomas*
JSB	*The Jewish Study Bible*. 2004. Edited by Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, New York: Oxford University Press.
EJ	*Encyclopaedia Judaica*. 1982. Edited by Fern Seckbach. 17 Volumes. Jerusalem: Keterpress.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Christian Dependence on Josephus

It is often argued (cf. Meier, 1991: 68; C.E. Price, 2008: 21; and Doherty, 2009: 533), that the most important, independent, extra-biblical/scriptural references to a possible flesh-and-blood Jesus and certain of his avowed contemporaries (i.e. James the Just and John the Baptist), are to be found, inter alia, in the writings of *Yosef ben Matityahu* a.k.a. *Josephus Flavius,* better known as Josephus.[3] Specifically, within his *Ant.* (*Antiquitates Judaicae*), ostensibly written in c. 94 C.E., are to be found three disputed passages, viz.:

1. *Ant.* 18, 3, 3 / 63–64 (better known as the *TF* [*Testimonium Flavianum]*);

2. *Ant.* 18, 5, 2 / 116–119 (which this book will refer to as the *BP* [*John the Baptist Passage]*); and

3. *Ant.* 20, 9, 1 / 197–203 (which this book will refer to as the *JP* [*James the Just Passage]*).

Only a few, mostly non-Christian, and very often, highly sceptical scholars have questioned the legitimacy of the *TF* (*Testimonium Flavianum*), *BP* (*John the Baptist Passage*) and *JP* (*James the Just Passage*) respectively.

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[3] Although *Publius* (or *Gaius*) *Cornelius Tacitus* possibly referred to Christians living at the time of *Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus* in his *Annales* (c. 116 C.E.), i.e. *An.* XV, 44, he is at best repeating hearsay. This cannot be employed as convincing evidence for an extra-biblical reference to an historical Jesus of Nazareth. Therefore, realistically speaking, the account, if genuine, only refers to followers or adherents of the then new religion known today as Christianity. In this regard, no-one seriously doubts that the religious cult(s) eventually known as Christianity existed by the second century C.E. This and similar issues are dealt with in greater detail in Chapter Two.

However, by and large, contemporary, predominantly Christocentric, scholarship (cf. Charlesworth, 1988: 93–4; Meier, 1991: 63; Fredriksen, 2000: 249; and C.E. Price, 2008: 22), claim that these passages have at least some degree of authenticity. In this context, they tend to view these three episodes as either being *completely* genuine or at worst, original Josephan creations with a modicum of amendment or embellishment by well-meaning, pious Christian scribes sometime in the first four centuries of the Common Era.[4]

Furthermore, based on this assumption, these often more conservative scholars are seemingly content to accept that these three passages provide historicity of Jesus researchers with a *dependable* nucleus of historical material. In short, the information that they contain corroborates their shared worldview regarding an historical Jesus, James the Just or John the Baptist.

This knowledge also satisfies the principal tenets of their religious belief. In sharp contradistinction, many of the more rational arguments in support of total interpolation (i.e. complete premeditated and dishonest forgery)–because they are often deemed to be anti-Christian in nature–are generally rejected by scholars of the Christian faith. Here, the tendency seems to be an almost automatic dismissal, without having undertaken an adequate analysis of the full significance of a particular thesis. In short, all too often, their seemingly perfunctory rebuttal gives the distinct impression that their conclusions are based on unwavering devotion rather than on any degree of rigorous understanding of the issue(s) under discussion.

Lastly, the tendency to defer to the majority view, whether it is sceptical or more conservative,[5] is also often seen to be justification for accepting a particular (possibly more popular), outlook rather than the specific probity and merit of an exacting argument. This accusation may (at times) be laid at the feet of both conservative and sceptical scholars.

According to the renowned Josephus scholar Feldman (in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 1992: 990–991) the authenticity of the *TF* passage has been almost unanimously accepted by scholars. Feldman also confirms that from

[4] Here I refer to "Pious Fraud". Specifically, this refers to, inter alia, the fraudulent manufacture of a supposedly historically valid text purely for the purposes of proselytisation and/or the writing of an apologetic by any member of the early Christian Church (c. 50–900 C.E.).

[5] More sceptical scholars regularly accuse the more conservative researchers like Kirby of being victims of a so-called "bandwagon" effect. Cf. Doherty, 2008: 49 and Doherty, 2009: 534.

the latter half of the twentieth century onwards, the vast majority of conservative, Christian scholars have never doubted the partial authenticity of these three passages–especially the *TF*. Indeed, between 1937 and 1980, of the 52 scholars who reviewed this topic, 39 believed that *portions* of the *TF* were authentic.

This is supported by Kirby (2014a) whose own review of the literature (in a scholarly online article which discusses the *TF* in depth), reveals that the trend in modern scholarship has moved even more dramatically towards *partial* authenticity. Indeed, Kirby supports the fact that of thirteen books written since 1980, ten of them argue that the *TF* to be partly genuine. Only the remaining three (secular authors) deny the authenticity of the *TF*.

Thus, considerable (albeit debateable) literary support exists which exhorts the reader to accept the authenticity of the three passages under review. However, it often fails to deal directly and/or objectively with certain refutations proffered by mostly non-Christian and/or more positivistic scholars. It would seem, therefore, that elements of personal bias (whether justified or not), and the specific constructed worldviews of the scholars concerned are a major contributor to the outcome of debate. It is fair to state that personal faith remains a major incentive behind most of these researchers' respective approaches to the issues of authenticity, partial authenticity or total forgery in *Ant.* Up until now, apart from the distinctly sceptical stance of scholars like Doherty[6], Olson[7], Wells[8] and Zindler[9] etc. this glaring oversight has not been analytically and impassively tackled head on.

Much has been proffered to date, to supposedly prove total and/or partial forgery but certain nagging aspects still leave room for understandable doubt. To be balanced, the dearth of convincing evidence which supports authenticity (to whatever degree) needs to be unpacked, amplified and wherever possible substantiated and/or refuted in the context of corroborated historical precedence. This includes, Josephus' known political and religious stances and literary style as well as recent, as yet unconsidered, but critically important discoveries made in the numismatic field by Kokkinos (2010: 363–400).

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[6] Cf. Doherty, 2009.
[7] Cf. Olson, 1999: 305–322.
[8] Cf. Wells, 1999.
[9] Cf. Zindler, 2003.

Thus, after several centuries of seemingly pointless debate, including the huge scholarly polemic which raged for nearly two centuries in Europe between c. 1600 and the late nineteenth century (cf. Bilde, 1988: 125), this book promises to proffer a conscious, albeit carefully constructed, effort to neutralise the derogatory effects of mechanical conformity to established and/or popular worldviews. In this context, this book offers a highly critical review of *all* arguments both positive and negative that claim to accurately position these three disputed passages.

Based on the available literature, it would seem that (more normally), the typical liberal and sceptical scholars will initiate matters by attempting to refute one or more of the passages under review and then, purely as a reaction, the more conservative ones will attempt to counter the claim. Again, because the more conservative scholars also have a vested interest in not having doubt cast on the historical existence of Jesus, they typically require the burden of proof to be placed on the side of the more sceptical scholars. The counterclaim is that the burden of proof is in fact being placed on the wrong side.[10]

Contemporary debate tends to follow this pattern and the following selected examples of argumentation as supplied by, inter alia, Barnett, Doherty, Dunn, Ehrman, Carrier, Charlesworth, Feldman, Fredriksen, Habermas, Hata, Holding, Kirby, Leidner, Mason, Meier, Olson, C.E. Price, R.M. Price, Vermes, Wells, Zeitlin and Zindler etc. serve merely to highlight the types of rationale and logic employed by scholars engaged in this apparently endless dispute.

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[10] Zindler explains his position in a far more amusing manner:

> [I]t must be realized that the burden of proof does not rest upon the skeptic in this matter. As always is the case, the burden of proof weighs upon those who assert that some thing or some process exists. If someone claims that he never has to shave because every morning before he can get to the bathroom he is assaulted by a six-foot rabbit with extremely sharp teeth who trims his whiskers better than a razor–if someone makes such a claim, no skeptic need worry about constructing a disproof. Unless evidence for the claim is produced, the skeptic can treat the claim as false. This is nothing more than sane, every-day practice.

Cf. Zindler, 1998: 2.

This book sets out to try and resolve this dispute. In this regard, it attempts to answer a number of questions that have bothered scholars for literally centuries.

Primarily, we need to objectively know to what degree the three passages of Christian import which appear in Josephus' *Ant.* may be deemed to be authentic and/or historically reliable. In this regard, this book reveals the following:

1. The indebtedness of contemporary, leading biblical scholars (especially within the context of the interpolation debate), to their preferred worldview when it comes to engaging in supposedly impartial, constructive and meaningful academic discourse.
2. Proof that Josephus (based on an in-depth analysis of his own worldview and historical context), could never have known and/or written about Jesus, John the Baptist or James the Just.
3. Hard evidence that specifically ante-Nicean Christian writers in general and independently needed to invent extra-biblical references to Jesus, John the Baptist and James the Just.
4. Lastly, rational evidence that points to the very identity of the interpolators concerned.

1.2 Some Notes Concerning the Employment of Terminology

Although this book has been designed primarily for the informed lay person and more seasoned Josephus scholar alike, it is imperative that before embarking on this journey of discovery that we are all on the same page, so-to-speak.

Thus, for the sake of greater clarity, certain terms that I will be employing need to be elucidated as regards their import and interpretation within a stated context. In most cases these are employed in a more regular way and do not necessarily deviate substantially from more common use. However, in certain situations a specific term may well include more nuanced significance.

Conservative scholars

It is certainly not my intention to lump together all Christian-based scholars into one clique identified by a singular and monolithic point of view. Rather, because, one of the central issues under critical review, is the influence of a scholar's worldview on the outcome of supposed objective reasoning it is sometimes necessary to use a collective adjective when referring to those

scholars who tend to walk a tightrope between faithful adherence to their personal religious convictions and intimate experiences and their academic training as supposedly dispassionate investigators.

Thus, the objective of the term "conservative scholar" is to highlight that the individual's constructed worldview not only overtly colours his/her perceptions but in fact has a deciding vote when determining the very outcome of a particular argument. Wells (1988b: 20–21) has perhaps a more negative understanding of this term:

> Conservative apologists still do the same . . . There is more parade of erudition and open-mindedness. But the conclusions always turn out to be in accordance with desire, in harmony with what is regarded as essential doctrine.

Thus for the purposes of this book, scholars, who as Wells intimates, tend to wear their religious convictions on their sleeve, are grouped together as "conservative". In this context, most conservative researchers would also subscribe to a confession of faith whereas a liberal, secular scholar would most definitely not. Although aspects of fundamentalism are certainly factors here, many, if not all, of the leading Christian-based scholars who will feature in this book still claim to be open–minded and purportedly champion rational thought.

Liberal scholars

Scholars, who are included for convenience under this epitaph, even if adhering to a particular worldview, are normally prepared to alter or modify their religious views or historical understanding when presented with hard evidence. Here, they are not subservient to confessions of faith. Many "liberal" scholars have what could be termed a "provisional" state of understanding. In other words, they are prepared to react immediately to the logic of an argument and are poised to change their opinion if the argument appears sound. Simultaneously, such individuals are more likely to fully comprehend and appreciate what they have just learned but with the proviso that it may well be subject to future emendation. Ideally, they have little or no personal baggage to slow them down.

Sceptical scholars

I will employ this term for those scholars who are overtly anti-fundamentalist, anti-organised religion (sometimes even atheistic in outlook). Their

constructed world-view, equally favours their approach although, by default, due to the fact that they have no personal attachment to the topic of their discussion they are more likely to be supremely critical and immediately accepting of any outcome that is backed by hard evidence. Many of these researchers seem to accept the import of embracing a provisional state of understanding and vehemently eschew any form of unsubstantiated dogma.

Extra-biblical/scriptural sources

This term will refer to any secular primary source written between c. 1–300 C.E. which refers in any way to Jesus and/or his claimed associates. Excluded here are the books of the New Testament, proto-gnostic or gnostic gospels, Jewish-Christian gospels, infancy gospels, fragmentary or partially preserved non-canonical gospels including reconstructed gospels. For the sake of convenience this term may also include the *Talmud Bavli*, *Talmud Yerushalmi, Tosefta* and any other relevant rabbinical material.

Interpolation

In normal parlance, this term refers to the modification or distortion of a text by the introduction of additional or extraneous material. These often scribal intercalations are recognised as textual inaccuracies which can occur during the routine process of copying a manuscript by hand. It is generally accepted that the older a manuscript (and which normally existed before the advent of modern reproduction technologies), the more likely it is that textual discrepancies might occur inadvertently.

The cause of these intercalations is well known. For example, copyists, on noticing what they believed to be an error or omission from a previous period, often wrote amendments and/or missing text in the margins. As marginal inscriptions occur in almost all handwritten manuscripts, it was on occasion difficult for a subsequent copyist to ascertain with clarity which marginal inscription was a record of, inter alia, a prior omission, a note of clarity or even a personal comment left behind by a previous reader.

Their personal constructed worldviews apart, more punctilious scribes might well transcribe everything that was observed in the margins of a manuscript and interpolate this into the main text of the new copy. These types of interpolation are well recognised but, in this book, the term will primarily apply to pre-meditated fraud. In this regard, innocent scribal errors (other than those caused by unconsciously/subconsciously projecting one's

personal world-view), will be referred to as such.

Thus, interpolation (apart from where the term is employed in a specific way by other authors), will refer to the deliberate addition of textual material by a scribe. Here interpolation includes the act of not only inserting new text, but also removing existing text, and/or amending surviving text deliberately to provide the unsuspecting reader with a new meaning and interpretation other than that which was intended by the original author.

For these reasons, the term "interpolation" is employed in this book as a generic label to indicate fraudulent and deliberate intercalation and redaction of an existing text, regardless of whether the scribe believed he was being directed by higher forces or not. Where the amendment was made by sincere oversight on the part of a particular scribe, this will be emphasised by the context of the discussion.

Jesus

Obviously, numerous individuals who lived in, inter alia, Galilee, Judea and Samaria (i.e. modern Israel) in the Tannaitic period[11], were at times known by the translated name of "Jesus". Therefore, unless indicated otherwise, in this book, the term "Jesus" refers specifically to the possible historical individual also known as Jesus the Nazarene or Jesus of Nazareth. It should also be pointed out that the employment of the accolade "of Nazareth" in no way implies that this title is accurate or that any agreement exists as to the correct etymology of this now popular and often misused term. We should also be mindful of not conflating a possible historical Jesus with the mythologised and/or supernatural Christ invented in the early centuries of the Common Era.

Worldview

I favour the insights of, inter alia, Koltko-Rivera (2000: 2). Thus a "worldview" should be seen as a way of "describing the universe and life within it, both in terms of what is and what ought to be." It would also be fair to state that a worldview is intimately linked to an individual's ideology.

[11] Also known as the Mishnaic period (i.e. c. 10–c. 220 C.E.).

1.3 My Preferred Approach

Interpretivist/constructivist episteme

I will take a more interpretivist/constructivist approach rather than a naïve positivistic one. According to Cohen and Manion (1994: 36), an interpretivist/constructivist approach to research has the intention of understanding the world of human experience better because it accepts that reality is as Mertens (2005: 12) confirms: "socially constructed". Here it is assumed that the constructed worldviews of all role-players reviewed in this book (including that of the researcher), will impact on the research findings.

This approach also allows me to make use of, where relevant and applicable, a wider range of methods which, when triangulated, may better assist in establishing greater validity of interpretation. With reference to Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) I need to be empowered, inter alia, to rely on both qualitative and quantitative methods (mixed methods). Here, quantitative data will be utilised in a manner which either bolsters or expands upon qualitative data and hopefully "effectively deepens the description".

It is also my personal contention that the greatest stumbling block to contemporary Josephus scholars reaching consensus on the interpolation debate is almost totally a result of the dominant worldviews of the researchers involved. An interpretivist/constructivist approach, fully focussed on this issue of social constructs, better assists in highlighting this problem and makes it possible to establish a more plausible context and, as far as is possible, shared worldview, within which rational deduction may take place.

In short, we need to acknowledge that we all carry a lot of baggage with us. If we are going to be objective in our discussions, we need to leave that baggage at the door before entering the room of rational debate. Or if that is not possible, perhaps because of one's deep commitment to an unyielding, irrational belief structure, then at the very least be honest enough to acknowledge that you are a biased person before attempting to claim that you are being in any way "objective". In a real sense, we need to lay down some ground rules here before we travel together on our journey of discovery.

It is acknowledged that all deliberation will be taking place within a linguistic paradigm that posits that knowledge is mediated solely through language (thinking) and consequently it is not possible to ever objectively know

what we assume to be reality. Therefore, an interpretivist/constructivist epistemology is clearly favoured.

It is accepted that it will never be possible to accurately reconstruct the historical context(s) that underpin(s) the premises of the various arguments tendered by the key-role players in the contemporary interpolation debate. It is also accepted that a particular scholar's constructed reality will impinge on his/her interpretation of the best-argued evidence. It can be safely argued that knowledge is that which is constructed by the researcher or theorist by virtue of any number of applicable methods.

Although it is certainly not refuted that information can be obtained by direct sense experience of the world (linguistic mediation), the important point is that we can never really know the source of that perception (the assumed external reality). Rather we constantly formulate (construct) an understanding of the world within which we live by thinking–a process which is always mediated linguistically. In this latter regard, certain of the views of the post-structuralist philosopher Derrida[12] are invaluable in grasping the point that language (in all its manifestations), cannot embody inviolable universal truth and is itself a flawed medium.

Unfortunately, language as "text", regardless of its form (i.e. oral, scribal, audial, olfactorial etc.), is the only medium we have–which points to meaning always being imperfectly mediated.

Again, because all interpretation can only take place within a particular "text" (i.e. context), it is never possible to return to the "source" or the "origin" deferred/referred to by the "text". In the same way the intentions of an author or an artist are, in the final analysis, quite irrelevant when interpreting say, a particular written text or work of art, since the reader or spectator, armed with their own constructed realities, only has the written or visual text by which to arrive at a particular (albeit shifting/provisional) point of view.

This approach neither accepts the maladroit conclusion that in the final analysis "anything goes" nor does it advocate nihilism. Undeniably, the complete opposite is implied. Any judicious deconstruction of a text implies a rigorous and critical analysis with an amplified awareness of the pitfalls of naïve relativism.

Lastly, I am indebted to the contributions made by numerous scholars.

[12] Cf. Derrida, 1997.

On many occasions I need to contradict what a particular scholar has claimed. When this occurs, this is not to be seen as a personal attack against the individual but, rather, the substance of the argument itself. In this context, if anyone makes a valid argument irrespective of their worldview it is treated as having merit and vice versa.

Chapter Two

Supposed Extra-Biblical/Scriptural References to Jesus of Nazareth and Associates

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to confirm that apart from Josephus' *Ant.* (which we still need to examine in greater detail), no other genuine historical sources exist to provide valid extra-biblical/scriptural evidence relevant to the historical existence of Jesus.

Obviously, we do have references to individuals such as Jesus of Nazareth, James the Just and John the Baptist in the New Testament. Furthermore, in the case of John the Baptist we could also point to the scriptures of the Mandaeans. However apart from these two sets of scripture, nothing else of value actually exists. Many Christian scholars will roundly disagree with me on this point. However, this chapter should prove my point beyond a shadow of a doubt.

In this regard, purely for the purposes of supplying some important context to the debate, I have taken the liberty of listing below, typically conservative beliefs about the validity of certain extra biblical sources. In this example, I have chosen Habermas (1996a, b and c) as an excellent representative of this approach, because he has conveniently dealt with many of these issues at length in his book *The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ* (1996a). I must also make it clear that I do not mean to attack this scholar personally. I am only interested in him as a source for typical faith-based deductions.

Thus, reproduced below in précis form, I have presented some key aspects of Habermas' stance on a wide range of issues directly related to claimed extra-biblical sources, including Josephus' *TF* which will be dealt with in far more detail in Chapter Three. In this context, it is informative to witness how his total commitment to his religious belief makes it possible for

Habermas to seemingly view all alleged extra-biblical sources as having total validity. In this regard, he makes a wide range of assertions, fuelled largely by wishful thinking based on a specific reading of the predicated sources. In this context, Habermas, speciously states that "these beliefs on the part of certain persons are a matter of historical record". Unfortunately, this is not true. I list some of Habermas' claims (1996a: 187–242) below:

1. According to Josephus and *Mara ben Serapion*, Jesus was really a "wise, virtuous and ethical man";

2. Based on the *TF* and certain passages in the *Talmud*, Jesus "had many disciples, from both the Jews and the Gentiles";

3. Based on Pliny and Tacitus, Jesus was worshipped as a deity and further, because of the *TF* we know that Jesus was also believed by some to be the Messiah;

4. Because of *Mara ben Serapion* we know that Jesus was called "King";

5. Due to Lucian, *Mara ben Serapion* and the Gospel of Thomas we know that there was a "tendency" among some ancient writers to "view Jesus as a philosopher with some distinctive teachings";

6. The *Talmud Sanhedrin* 43a refers specifically to Jesus;

7. Both Tacitus and Josephus confirm Jesus' death at the hands of Pontius Pilate;

8. Phlegon, the *Talmud*, Josephus and the *Acts of Pilate* supply specific details of Jesus' crucifixion, including his nailing to the cross, the gambling for his garments and the three-hour darkness;

9. *Mara Bar Serapion*'*s* letter is evidence that Jesus was "executed unjustly and that the Jews were judged accordingly by God";

10. Tacitus, Suetonius, Pliny and *Mara Bar Serapion* supply evidence of the resurrection of Jesus. We know this because the latter writer stated 'Jesus' teachings lived on in his disciples;

11. Phlegon's references support the notion of Jesus appearing after his death and displaying his *stigmata*;

12. The contents of the *Toldoth Yeshu* are factual;

13. Pliny's comments about Christians worshipping before dawn may be a reference to Sunday;

14. Pliny confirms that Christians worshipped Jesus as a deity;

15. Thallus' comments are evidence that early sceptics were seeking logical explanations to explain away assertions of Christ's divinity as soon as twenty years after his death; and

16. According to Tacitus, Christians were present at the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E.

It is in this context of inaccurate and/or misleading deductions, that this chapter reviews all claimed extra-biblical/scriptural works that are often held up by the more credulous as bona fide, extra biblical, historical evidence for the existence of Jesus and/or his ministry.

This chapter also serves to validate the most plausible historical context for the suspected interpolations in *Ant.* For example, due to the lack of suitable sources, early Christian apologists were often forced to manufacture them. Certainly, if valid proof had been freely available to Christian writers at the time (i.e. before c. 400 C.E.) there would not have been any need for pious fraud!

This review is also necessary because, although most sceptical scholars[13] refute all of the sources discussed in this chapter, many fundamentalist Christian scholars will claim the complete opposite. For many Christians, these texts are indisputable valid historical sources for Jesus and further, are considered so trustworthy that those who would even dare to question them will find it difficult to do so. In this context (Cf. Holding, 2008: 19) J.

[13] For example, the well-known sceptic, Wells, commenting on the reasons for the lack of extra-biblical references to Jesus of Nazareth, states: "[T]here is no reason why the pagan writers of this period should have thought Christianity any more important than other enthusiastic religions of the Empire. Dio Cassius, who wrote … as late as about AD 229, makes no mention at all of Christians or Christianity, and alludes but once to its great rival, Mithraism." Cf. Wells, 1975: 15).

Brown, Hannam, Harper, Holding, O'Connell, C.E. Price and Rosero also consider many of the texts under scrutiny in this chapter to be totally genuine and valid.[14]

Consequently, this chapter will look critically at the claimed historical references to Jesus (and any other individual closely associated with him) which might offer the objective historian with any reliable, corroborative, extra-biblical/scriptural data, however meagre it may be. Special attention will be given to the evocative passages that ostensibly feature in the work of Pliny (the Younger)[15], Trajan[16], Suetonius[17], Tacitus[18] and Tertullian[19]. In addition, the Christian claims of extra-biblical/scriptural historical sources in the respective works of *Mara bar Serapion*, Thallus, Phlegon, Papias and Lucian Samosata will also be briefly reviewed.

Lastly, an appraisal will be made of the six well-known *supposed* references to Jesus, his parents or disciples, which appear in the uncensored *Talmud Bavli* and *Tosefta* respectively.

NB: For those readers who are already well aware of the invalidity of these references as proof for the historical existence of Jesus they may proceed directly to Chapter Three.

2.2 *Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus* a.k.a. Pliny (the Younger) (c. 62–c. 113 C.E.)

When Pliny was serving as proconsul of *Bithynia et Pontus* (c. 111 C.E.) he

[14] It is important to note, that these authors do not seem to be able to distinguish between a possible historical Jesus of Nazareth and the Roman deity called Christ based on the Christological notions and dogmas as developed in the first few centuries of the Christian church's evolution. It is also patently clear, that they fervently attack any scholar who refutes the existence of an historical Jesus as though he or she were automatically guilty of trying to destroy Christianity itself. Here, they do not seem to understand the enormous difference between a "Jesus Myth" and a "Christ Myth". Indeed, these two completely disparate terms are conflated not only in the title of their work but also throughout their combined texts.

[15] *Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus* (c. 62–c. 113 C.E.).

[16] *Caesar Nerva Traianus Divi Nervae Filius Augustus* (53–117 C.E.).

[17] *Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus* (c. 69–140 C.E.).

[18] (*Publius* or *Gaius*) *Cornelius Tacitus* (c. 56–117 C.E.).

[19] *Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus* (c. 160–225 C.E.)

purportedly wrote *Ep.* X, 96[20] to the Emperor Trajan as follows:

> C. Pliny to the Emperor Trajan:
>
> It is my invariable rule, Sir, to refer to you in all matters where I feel doubtful; for who is more capable of removing my scruples, or informing my ignorance? **Having never been present at any trials concerning those who profess Christianity, I am unacquainted not only with the nature of their crimes,** or the measure of their punishment, but how far it is proper to enter into an examination concerning them. Whether, therefore, any difference is usually made with respect to ages, or no distinction is to be observed between the young and the adult; whether repentance entitles them to a pardon; or if a man has been once a Christian, it avails nothing to desist **from his error**; whether the very **profession** of Christianity, unattended with any criminal act, or only **the crimes themselves inherent in the profession** are punishable; on all these points I am in **great doubt**. In the meanwhile, the method I have observed towards those who have been brought before me as Christians is this: I asked them whether they were Christians; if they admitted it, I repeated the question twice, and threatened them with punishment; if they persisted, I ordered them to be at once punished: for I was persuaded, whatever the nature of their opinions might be, a contumacious and inflexible obstinacy certainly deserved correction. There were others also brought before me possessed with the same infatuation, but being Roman citizens, **I directed them to be sent to Rome**. But this crime spreading (as is usually the case) **while it was actually under prosecution**, several instances of the same nature occurred. An anonymous information was laid before me containing a charge against several persons, who upon examination denied they were Christians, or had ever been so. They repeated after me an invocation to the gods, and offered religious rites with wine and incense before your statue (which for that purpose I had ordered to be brought, together with those of the gods), and even reviled the name of Christ: whereas there is no forcing, it is said, those who are really Christians into any of these compliances: I thought it proper, therefore, to discharge them. Some among those who were accused by a witness in person at first confessed themselves Christians, but immediately after denied it; the rest owned indeed that they had been of that number formerly, but had now (some above three, others more, and a few above **twenty years ago**) renounced that error. They all worshipped your statue and the images of the gods, uttering imprecations at the same time against the name of Christ. They affirmed the whole of their guilt, or their error, was, that they met on a stated day before it was light, and addressed a form of prayer to Christ, as to a [quasi] divinity, binding themselves by a solemn oath, not for the

[20] English translation according to The Project Gutenberg EBook of Letters of Pliny, by Pliny [Online]. Available: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2811/2811-h/2811-h.htm#link2H_4_0208 [12 May 2014].

> purposes of any wicked design, but never to commit any fraud, theft, or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom **to separate, and then reassemble,** to eat in common a harmless meal. **From this custom, however, they desisted after the publication of my edict,** by which, according to your commands, I forbade the meeting of any assemblies. After receiving this account, I judged it so much the more necessary to endeavour to extort the real truth, by putting two female slaves to the torture, who were said to officiate' in their religious rites: but **all I could discover was evidence of an absurd and extravagant superstition**. I deemed it expedient, therefore, to adjourn all further proceedings, in order to consult you. For it appears to be a matter highly deserving your consideration, more especially as great numbers must be involved in the danger of these prosecutions, which have already extended, and are still likely to extend, to persons of all ranks and ages, and even of both sexes. In fact, **this contagious superstition is not confined to the cities only, but has spread its infection among the neighbouring villages and country.** Nevertheless, **it still seems possible to restrain its progress**. The temples, at least, which were once **almost deserted**, begin now to be frequented; **and the sacred rites, after a long intermission, are again revived;** while there is a general demand for the victims, which till lately found very few purchasers. From all this it is easy to conjecture what numbers might be reclaimed if a general pardon were granted to those who shall repent of their error [my emphases, insertion and UK-based English spelling convention favoured].

The Emperor Trajan (*Ep.* X, 97)[21] responded accordingly:

> Trajan to Pliny:
>
> You have adopted the right course, my dearest Secundus, in investigating the charges against the Christians who were brought before you. It is not possible to lay down any general rule for all such cases. Do not go out of your way to look for them. If indeed they should be brought before you, and the crime is proved, **they must be punished**; with the restriction, however, that where the party denies he is a Christian, and shall make it evident that he is not, by invoking our gods, let him (notwithstanding any former suspicion) be pardoned upon his repentance. Anonymous information ought not to be received in any sort of prosecution. It is introducing a very dangerous precedent, and is quite foreign to the spirit of our age [my emphasis].

[21] English translation according to The Project Gutenberg EBook of Letters of Pliny, by Pliny [Online]. Available: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2811/2811-h/2811-h.htm#link2H_4_0208 [12 May 2014].

A review of *Ep*. X, 96 and 97

To obviate pointless debate, a review of the import of these two letters will commence with the naïve assumption that they be considered to be wholly genuine. This approach should be seen as fair since it will clearly favour the opinions of those scholars who would impulsively point to these documents as being *bona fide* extra-biblical/scriptural evidence for an historical Jesus.

Thus, in the context of what is written in these two interrelated letters, if they are really genuine, then it ensures that the following may be fairly surmised by the non-critical reader:

1. Pliny appears to be reacting to some prior, unknown directive from Trajan;

2. Pliny does not seem to be that certain as to what constitutes a Christian;

3. Christians assembled before dawn and prayed to "Christ" as though he were a quasi-deity;

4. Christians, who had been assembled together in worship, subsequently separated and then re-assembled again before partaking of a "harmless" communal meal;

5. Christians were being tried for reasons that seem quite unclear;

6. Some former Christians admitted to being part of the cult up to some twenty years earlier (i.e. c. 91 C.E.);

7. Christianity is referred to as a "profession" with its own *inherent* crimes;

8. Christianity was also viewed as being an erroneous form of conduct; absurd and extravagant superstition;

9. Christianity is likened to an infection that is spreading fairly rapidly in both town and country;

10. Pliny seemingly contradicts his predominant claim that Christians are, inter alia, absurd, erroneous, superstitious criminals when he paradoxically informs Trajan that Christians take "a solemn oath, not

for the purposes of any wicked design, but never to commit any fraud, theft, or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up";

11. The more "official" religions had recently lost nearly all of their membership as a result of the spread of Christianity and Pliny states that his proscriptions were not having any effect at curbing the dramatic spread of the Christian practices. However, later in the same letter, he states that his actions were having a positive effect and citizens were returning to the traditional temples;

12. Anyone who insisted on being identified with Christianity was liable to be punished;

13. It seems as though, if convicted, the death penalty was possible? Certainly, Roman citizens suspected of practicing Christianity were treated differently to slaves and freedmen and were sent all the way to Rome to face trial! If one takes modern-day Amesia (Ancient Amezia) as a mid-point for the province of *Bithynia et Pontus*, it clearly implies that Roman citizens accused of being Christians were automatically transported at least 1600 kilometres (as the crow flies) or some 2,200 kilometres if travelling by land route, to the west, merely to be tried; and

14. At the time of writing, although Pliny seems to indicate that he had personally questioned persons suspected of being Christians, yet he states quite clearly at the outset, that he had *never* attended a trial of any person who claimed to be a Christian. This ambiguity aside, he also seems to indicate that on one sole occasion, he organised a trial for two female slaves (who it was claimed "officiated' at Christian rites). At this occasion the slaves had to be tortured in order to extract a confession of an "absurd" faith.

Trajan confirms the following:

1. People should not be prosecuted by virtue of anonymous allegations; and

2. Christians were considered to be automatically guilty of some unnamed crime. When convicted of this unstated crime they were to be punished.

Pliny's seeming ignorance of Christians

Even if these two letters are genuine, they clearly inform the reader that Pliny was, prior to this stated recent exposure, quite ignorant of Christians, their belief system or Christian activity in general. This in itself should be seen as most unlikely, given his previous long and distinguished legal career in various centres of the Roman Empire. It also flies in the face of the fact that the same letter tells us that Pliny knew this cult to be prohibited by Roman law. In this regard, if the letter is wholly genuine, we must also logically surmise that Christianity had *never* manifested itself overtly in the Roman Empire *before* this time (c. 111 C.E.). This observation is tempered with the claim that some former Christians had been part of the cult "above twenty years ago". Regardless, if the letter, supposedly written by Pliny himself, is incorrectly reporting Pliny's total ignorance of prior Christian activity then, logically, it must be quite fraudulent. The possibility that Pliny had never heard of Christians (regardless of their "denomination"), before 111 C.E. whilst they had been active in various parts of the Roman Empire from at least the sixth decade of the Common Era onwards is so unlikely as to be well-nigh impossible. This fact in itself should make anyone who is reading this text highly suspicious. A rational person would agree that we need to tread carefully here. Is this letter completely fraudulent? If so what would have been the agenda of the fraudster? Is it genuine? Why then does it contain such obvious contradictions? Perhaps it is partly fraudulent?

What is needed here is more substantiated information concerning the known historical contexts for both Pliny and Trajan and see if that does not assist us in our deliberations.

Trajan's fear of assemblies

One possible reason that is often cited for the proscription against groups of Christians meeting in the early hours of the morning concerns a possible ban by Trajan of assemblies that could lead to civil unrest. For example, in *Ep.* X, 34[22], some previous imperial proscription against the gathering of assemblies is suggested when Trajan responds negatively to Pliny's perfectly reasonable request to form a guild of fire fighters in Nicomedia in order to obviate destructive fires:

[22] English translation according to Melmoth (Tr.) 1927. *Pliny: Letters. Vol. II*: 320.

> Whatever name we give them, and for whatever purposes them may be founded, they will not fail to form themselves into factious, assemblies, however short their meetings may be.

However, in *Ep.* X, 93[23] Trajan seems far more balanced when responding to Pliny's request to form a charitable society which will by default necessitate large numbers of individuals forming assemblies:

> Trajan to Pliny
>
> If the petition of the Amiseni which you have transmitted to me, concerning the establishment of a charitable society, be agreeable to their own laws, which by the articles of alliance it is stipulated they shall enjoy, I shall not oppose it; especially if these contributions are employed, not for the purpose of riot and faction, but for the support of the indigent. In other cities, however, which are subject to our laws, I would have all assemblies of this nature prohibited.

Take note that Trajan allows this assembly, not just because it involves charitable work but more importantly because Amiseni had different laws to other Roman cities. This begs the question why Trajan (*Ep.* X, 34) disallowed the fire brigade in Nicomedia. Certainly there was no proscription in Nicomedia against Romans meeting for religious purposes as Pliny himself complains of the lack of attendance at the traditional temples. In short, large groups of worshippers must have been permitted to congregate for religious purposes. Based on *Ep.* X, 96 and still assuming that it is genuine, it would seem that *only* Christians were being targeted.

Known Roman attitudes toward foreign religions

Although it is accepted that in the early fourth century C.E.[24] there was a period of some eight years when Christians were directly embattled for

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[23] English translation according to Melmoth (Tr.) 1927. *Pliny: Letters. Vol. II*: 396–397.

[24] The Roman emperor *Gaius Aurelius Valerius Diocletianus Augustus* (245–311 C.E.), who reigned from 284 to 305 C.E. is credited with the instigation of the Diocletianic Persecution (303–311 C.E.), which was aimed primarily at restoring traditional Roman religious practices within the empire. As a consequence, Christians faced possibly their most difficult period of maltreatment which only dissipated after *Flavius Valerius Aurelius Constantinus Augustus* a.k.a. Constantine the Great (c. 272–337 C.E.) and *Gaius Valerius Licinianus Licinius Augustus* a.k.a. Licinius I (c. 263–325 C.E.) met in *Mediolanum* to establish, inter alia, a better dispensation for Christians within the empire in February 313 C.E. (i.e. the Edict of

mostly political reasons, it is generally accepted that the Romans were more normally, fairly compliant when it came to personal and private religious practice. Green (2010: 1–2) confirms that the Romans' stance when it came to dealing with newcomers was, predictably, "complex and contradictory". Certainly much evidence exists that everyday Romans–like most people anywhere and in any period of history–disliked change and were initially xenophobic when confronted by unfamiliar social situations that appeared to threaten their Roman sensibilities and traditions.

For example, it is instructive to look at *Ep.* X, 49[25] where Pliny seeks permission from Trajan to tear down a non-Roman temple (albeit in disrepair and possible disuse). However, the temple was originally consecrated. Pliny wants to know whether he can remove the building without breaking any religious taboos or laws:

> To the Emperor Trajan
>
> The Nicomedians, Sir, before my arrival in this province, had begun to build a new forum adjoining their former, in a corner of which stands an ancient temple dedicated to the mother of the gods. This fabric must either be repaired or removed, and for this reason chiefly, because it is a much lower building than that very lofty one which is now in process of erection. Upon enquiry whether this temple had been consecrated, I was informed that their ceremonies of dedication differ from ours. You will be pleased, therefore, Sir, to consider whether a temple which has not been consecrated according to our rites may be removed, consistently with the reverence due to religion: for, if there should be no objection from that quarter, the removal in every other respect would be extremely convenient.

Trajan's response (*Ep.* X, 50)[26] is informative. It implies that Roman law overrules the consecration rites of a foreign religion.

> Trajan to Pliny
>
> You may without scruple, my dearest Secundus, if the situation requires it, remove the temple of the mother of the gods, from the place where it now stands, to any other spot more convenient. You need be under no difficulty with respect to the act of dedication; for the ground of a foreign city is not capable of receiving that kind of consecration which is sanctified by our

Milan).

[25] English translation according to Melmoth (Tr.) 1927. *Pliny: Letters. Vol. II*: 338–339.

[26] English translation according to Melmoth (Tr.) 1927. *Pliny: Letters. Vol. II*: 340–341.

laws.[27]

One wonders whether this action would have been allowed had the religious community concerned still made use of this temple. Nonetheless, it is necessary to determine what the more likely attitude of a typical Roman authority would have been to the perceived incursion of foreign religious sects in the second half of the first century and the early part of the second century C.E. This will be undertaken to construct a more credible historical context for, inter alia, Pliny and Trajan's letters (i.e. *Ep.* X, 96 and 97).

Roman attitudes toward the Alexandrian and Egyptian cults

For example, (cf. Turcan, 1996: 86–87; 2000: 121), it is known that on a number of occasions (e.g. c. 59, c. 58, c. 53, and c. 48 B.C.E.), the Roman senate ordered the altars and statues of Egyptian cults to be torn down. However, despite these actions, more generally, the Pharaonic mystery religions continued to remain popular with the broader Roman populace.

Within this context, it is already well-known there were primarily both political as well as religious reasons why the Egyptian cults were recurrently targeted by the Roman senate:

1. The Egyptian cults, which emphasised the human emotions and the sensuous, were believed by the more conservatively minded, to encourage loose morals and because of their mysterious and clandestine nature, they elicited suspicion. Thus, from a more traditional Roman perspective they lacked the decorum that the official deities surely demanded.

2. Many citizens, especially from the lower classes, associated Egyptian religions with a foreign empire that was hostile to Rome. At the time, it was assumed that adherence to a Pharaonic belief system was somehow unpatriotic and anti-Roman.

Regardless, this was not everyone's opinion; especially those from the upper classes. Undeniably, a year after the assassination of Julius Caesar[28] (44 B.C.E.) there was a renewed interest in the worship of Isis (cf. Scullard, 1982: 207). Indeed, (cf. Turcan, 2000: 121), the triumvirs Marcus

[27] The implication here is that different laws and concessions applied in Rome.
[28] *Gaius Iulius Caesar* (100–44 B.C.E.)

Antonius[29], young Octavian Caesar[30] and Marcus Lepidus[31] even planned to erect a temple to Isis and Serapis from public funds. This was promised, ostensibly, to gain the favour of the Roman citizenry. However, this project was never realised.

Notice that the original plan of the triumvirs was to elicit support from the Roman citizenry. If foreign and pharaonic belief systems were really so hated by the average citizen, no politician worth his salt would have bothered trying to erect temples in their honour. This tells us that the average Roman not only accepted these foreign cults but would have been so enamoured by their physical presence that they would subsequently have felt better disposed towards the somewhat irregular political activities of the newly formed triumvirate. It should be borne in mind that this triumvirate was in fact undermining the normal workings of the Roman republic and indeed within a few short years the republic would fall and be replaced by an empire–something that was unthinkable in the mid-50s B.C.E.

It is true that for a time, largely as a consequence of the political tensions between Augustus Caesar[32], Marcus Antonius and Queen Cleopatra[33], (cf. Merced-Ownbey 2008: 30), Egyptian and Alexandrian cults were on occasion, distrusted right up until the reign of Tiberius[34] (i.e. 14–37 C.E.). Indeed, as will be discussed in Chapter Three, Josephus (*Ant.* 18, 3, 4 / 65–80) supplies us with an account of the Roman destruction of the temple to Isis in Tiberius' time.

However historians such as Gasparini (2008) remind us that due to the lack of reliable evidence, we must be careful not to imagine that we can now accurately ratiocinate the precise relationship between certain "foreign" beliefs (such as the worship of Isis) and the general Roman citizenry.

By and large, Romans surely were not averse to alternative belief systems. For example, the huge devotion given to the cult of Isis is well known and evidenced by the construction of the enormous *Iseum Metellinum* commenced in c. 71 B.C.E. This was restored in the time of Augustus and again in the Flavian period and is referred to in the *Historia Augusta.* According to Gasparini (2008), this structure is situated in Rome on the

[29] *Marcus Antonius Marci Filius Marci Nepos* (83–30 B.C.E.).
[30] *Gaius Iulius Caesar Octavianus* (After 44 B.C.E) (63 B.C.E.–14 C.E.).
[31] *Marcus Aemilius Lepidus* (69–30 B.C.E.).
[32] *Imperator Caesar Divi Filius Augustus* (After 27 B.C.E.) (63 B.C.E.–14 C.E.).
[33] *Cleopatra VII Philopator* (69–30 B.C.E.).
[34] *Tiberius Caesar Divi Augusti Filius Augustus* (42 B.C.E.–37 C.E.).

Oppius, (near the modern *Piazza Iside* and *Via Muratori*). It must have once boasted, inter alia, a platform measuring 58 x 76 meters delimited by a granite column *peristylium*. Along its axis was located a pool measuring seven x 37 metres. This sacred site once included a sanctuary which is preserved today for some 112 metres. Gasparini (2008) informs us that this archaeological site has yielded up many isiaca, such as frescos, mosaics, reliefs and statues. In this context, Gasparini (2008) confirms that, indeed, the average Roman citizen may well have criticised the more extreme aspects of foreign beliefs–such as the worship of Egyptian zoomorphic divinities. However, for the most part pharaonic beliefs were "greeted precociously and enthusiastically".

In addition, as confirmed by Merced-Ownbey (2008: 26) and already well-known to students of late Republican Roman history, most proscriptions against Alexandrian/pharaonic belief systems, when they occurred, seem to have been predominantly focused on the city of Rome itself. Many of these interdictions did not apply to the other centres of the then emerging Roman Empire. For example, in 29 B.C.E. (immediately after the death of Antonius and Cleopatra) Augustus prohibited the cult of Isis within the sacred enclosure of the city (*pomoerium*). A few years later, in 21 B.C.E., Agrippa[35] disallowed Alexandrine cults within a kilometre and a half from the city.

However, all this was to change after Caligula[36], renowned for his more oriental tastes, came to power. Certainly, he built a great temple devoted to Isis in the *Campus Martius* (i.e. the *Iseum Campense*). In this context, Alston (1998: 313) verifies the tolerant climate that followed on from Tiberius' reign: For example, Nero introduced Isaic festivals into the Roman calendar and Domitian not only rebuilt the *Iseum Campense* but may have also constructed the *Iseum* at Beneventum.

Obviously, despite its alleged foreign and anti-Roman connotations, the Isiac cult was well favoured in Rome–at least during the Julio-Claudian period. In addition, the situation in Rome before Caligula's time may not have been quite as monochromatic as often painted by certain historians. More recent research suggests that Augustus in fact *encouraged* Egyptian culture in his new empire. Broadbent (2012: 59–61) presents two distinct, even possibly antithetical, ways that Augustus may have employed

[35] *Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa* (c. 64–12 B.C.E.).
[36] *Gaius Iulius Caesar Augustus Germanicus* (12–41 C.E.).

Egyptian culture for propagandistic purposes:

1. Augustus gave credibility and legality to his authority in Rome by deliberately flaunting the muddied memory of Cleopatra VII Philopater and Marcus Antonius as foils to his own time-honoured, moral, social and political ideals. To this end, he unashamedly employed, inter alia, both artworks and architecture that iconographically compared him favourably to his former opponents. Ironically, by associating himself with the memory of Cleopatra and Antonius, both of whom were strongly tainted by their long association to non-Roman and Egyptian cultural values, Augustus sold the message that by sharp contrast, only he was a worthy, traditional Roman leader with sacrosanct and orthodox values. This message, largely accepted by the greater Roman populace, ultimately helped Augustus to legitimise his long and mostly successful reign.

2. Augustus justified his authority in Rome by, surprisingly, assimilating Egypt's most symbolic art and architecture. This action assisted him to not only beautify Rome but also intensify the image of his new empire's supremacy over once-mighty Egypt.

Roman attitudes toward Judaism

We have seen how the Romans dealt with Egyptian beliefs. What about Judaism, a religion that for the Romans, was practically indistinguishable from early Christianity? It is generally accepted that during the Republican and Julio-Claudian periods, Romans were fairly indulgent when it came to Judaism. At one extreme, it is known that certain Romans viewed Judaism as a foreign and uncultured cult. For example, Cicero[37] describes the Jewish religion in his *Pro L. Flacco Oratio*: 67[38]:

> But to resist this **barbarous superstition** were an act of dignity, to despise the multitude of Jews, which at times was most unruly in the assemblies in defence of the interests of the republic, was an act of the greatest wisdom [my emphasis].

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[37] *Marcus Tullius Cicero* (106–3 B.C.E.).

[38] English translation according to *Cicero* 2014. *Pro Flacco*, 67 in *Perseus Under Philogic* [Online]. Available: http://perseus.uchicago.edu/perseus-cgi/citequery3.pl?dbname=LatinAugust2012&query=Cic.%20Flac.%2067&getid=0 [1 September 2014]. Also, cf. Maselli 2000. *Cicerone, in difesa di Lucio Flacco* (*Pro Flacco*).

On the other hand, as verified by Van Kooten (2007: 637–644), Varro[39] praised Judaism because of its great antiquity. It is also understood that certain Romans like Varro, viewed the Jewish God as equivalent to Jupiter– who of course was the chief deity of the official Roman Pantheon.

It is often mooted that perhaps the citizens of Rome would not have been able (or bothered) to differentiate between Judaism and nascent Christian practices, when the latter first appeared sometime in the second half of the first century C.E. Nonetheless, as confirmed by Rutgers (1994: 57), the Romans first developed an extensive corpus of edicts with respect to Jews at about the same time. With reference to Josephus (*Ant.* 14, 10, 2 / 190–264 and 16, 6, 2 / 162–173), Both Rutgers (1994: 57) and Green (2010: 5) support the interpretation that due largely to the initial policies of Julius Caesar[40], as from c. 50 B.C.E. to the beginning of the Common Era, Jews were mostly guaranteed their religious freedom. In this context they were legally permitted to, inter alia, meet freely as organised members of religious associations known as *thiasoi*, observe the Sabbath and the Jewish festivals, send money to the Temple in Jerusalem, and enjoy autonomy in their communal affairs. Jews were even absolved from compulsory enrolment in the Roman army.

However, despite this protection, it is also known (as will be discussed in more detail) that Jews were conceivably expelled from Rome in the reign of Tiberius (19 C.E.). We also know from Philo (*DLG*, 24 / 159–160) that under the tyranny of Sejanus[41] (Tiberius' "*Socius Laborum*" and prefect of the Praetorian Guard), Jews suffered heavy victimisation that only ended with Sejanus' final downfall in 31 C.E.

There is a possibility that an expulsion occurred again during the reign of Claudius[42] (41–54 C.E.). Much literature exists that puts forward various inconclusive arguments for the actual cause and scale of these two occurrences. Regardless, the possibility that either dislodgment of large numbers of Jews was as a direct result of religious intolerance alone is slight. Rutgers (1994: 57) concurs, and in the case of the banishment under Tiberius (i.e. 19 C.E.) the actions taken were limited specifically to the Jewish community in Rome and not the rest of the Empire. Even, here, the

[39] *Marcus Terentius Varro* (116–27 B.C.E.).
[40] *Gaius Iulius Gai filius Caesar* (100–44 B.C.E.).
[41] *Lucius Aelius Seianus* (20 B.C.E.–31 C.E.)
[42] *Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus* (10 B.C.E.–54 C.E.).

affected Jews did not have to move far from Rome itself.

Roman attitudes toward Christianity

With the aforementioned contexts in mind, it is not at all clear why, according to *Ep.* X, 96, individuals, especially Roman citizens, who specifically professed Christianity were being singled out and tried for criminal activity merely for paying homage to a foreign deity. Indeed, taken at face value it makes absolutely no sense. More typically, it is largely accepted that the Romans recognised, tolerated and/or neutralised numerous deities, both official and the more non-traditional.[43] Cowley (2008: 7) with reference to Wardman (1982: 2) confirms that the evidence supports the fact that despite Roman conservatism, ultimately they tended to appropriate, to develop, to recognise and encompass new deities and cults.

As has been witnessed already, the more conventional wisdom seems to be, that, by and large, the Romans were extremely superstitious and religious in outlook. Undeniably, they mostly ascribed their success at dominating the Mediterranean world due to their constant maintenance of good relations with the gods *collectively* (i.e. both traditional and foreign deities were respected).

However, the impression is given in *Ep.* X, 96 and 97, that in c. 111 C.E., in a remote province of the Roman empire, Christianity was somehow perceived as being *very different* to the other cults and religions, whether official, imported or more "*outremer*" (including Judaism), and for no immediately obvious reason, seemingly posed an enormous threat to Roman security.

In this latter regard, if one takes these two letters at face value, only two possible reasons for Roman aversion might seem to be suggested here (albeit inconclusively). Firstly, if the more traditional temples were really (initially) experiencing a mass exodus of adherents, one might assume this had serious financial repercussions for certain individuals and/or religious associations. Perhaps someone's pocket was being hurt? Secondly,

[43] Despite the fact that Cowley (2008: 53–59) takes the claimed Roman persecution of Christianity at face value and never questions possible Christian fraud as regards certain of the accounts of Roman intolerance of that specific religion, even she, accedes that by and large, depending on the social and economic conditions then prevalent, the Romans, if not always immediately tolerant were largely accommodating of other belief systems.

assuming that the account is genuine, perhaps Christians (like Jews), took explicit and public issue with some aspect of the Imperial cult originally popularised by Augustus Caesar? Undeniably, this practice ensured that emperors (both living and dead) who had been granted divine status, were part and parcel of Imperial Rome's official pantheon. This view is supported by Magyar (2009: 385–386), who points out that the Roman emperors were worshipped as gods due to their status and not their transcendence. In this regard, they were never considered superior to other traditional deities.[44]

It is therefore, quite possible that the Imperial cult was viewed as pivotal to Rome's endurance. In this regard, with reference to the findings of Magyar (2009: 392–394), to undermine or neglect its practices would have been seen as both deleterious to the well-being of the state and also intimates strongly that the reason why the Christians were so aggressively persecuted was due to their perceived acts of sedition?

Therefore, if given some latitude, it is possible to conceive of a Jew or Christian, with reference to their abhorrence of graven images, overtly refusing to pay any form of homage or acknowledgment to, say, an official portrait bust of the Roman Emperor. In this regard, early Christians, like Jews, might well have viewed this practice as akin to idolatry.

The only problem with this opinion is that we see no direct evidence for the same level of discrimination and blind hatred against Jews–at least some of whom would surely have had a problem with "worshipping" craven images (i.e. paying obeisance to the bust of a Roman Emperor).

Notwithstanding, based purely on the letters themselves, the best that can be ascertained, is that by 111 C.E., a relatively new phenomenon called Christianity was making a noticeable impact in *Bithynia et Pontus*. Paradoxically, although becoming increasingly popular with slave, freedman and citizen alike–to the point that other long-established religions were rapidly losing membership–it was also considered to be synonymous with criminal activity by the Roman authorities. This surely does not ring true, for why would something that was so extremely popular in *Bithynia et Pontus* simultaneously be considered so objectionable? It is also peculiar that Pliny stresses that the Christian meal is "harmless" yet equates the

[44] However, it should be pointed out that scholars such as Magyar also seem to uncritically accept the various reports of Christian persecution at face value. As such his findings are possibly predisposed. Cf. Magyar, 2009: 385–394. Also, cf. Dirven (2011: 141–156).

religion to criminal activity. Also, is it not quite ironic that despite Christianity's stated criminality, the Roman authorities were apparently well aware that those individuals who identified with this cult *promised* not to partake in any unlawful activity? If this information is genuine, the Roman authorities would have surely welcomed such upright and moral, self-regulating groups who so overtly avoided felonious pursuits. Why then does Pliny confirm that they alone were being so aggressively persecuted?

As an aside, if the letters are in fact total forgeries, it raises another issue. The only conceivable purpose for this specific falsehood would have been to have given the distinct impression (i.e. at the actual time of the interpolation) that Christians living in the early second century C.E. were being unfairly and cruelly persecuted by the Romans. Had the interpolator wanted *solely* to provide fraudulent proof of an extra-biblical/scriptural reference to Jesus, he need only have mentioned a gospel account, such as Jesus' crucifixion by the authority of Pontius Pilate. Therefore, the fact that the hypothetical fraudster does not employ a biblical/scriptural reference and does not seem to be interested in establishing any extra-biblical/scriptural record for the existence of Jesus but is only concerned with describing atrocities committed by Roman authorities against peace-loving and law-abiding Christians, should be seen as highly significant.

Moreover, according to *Ep.* X, 96, there is no overt evidence that those who professed the Christian faith worshipped an individual/deity specifically called "Jesus", and certainly there is absolutely no reference in either of these letters to an historical personage called "Jesus", "the Nazarene" or the like. Even if this "Christ" deity was in fact believed to be identical to an individual named "Jesus" by the Christians mentioned in the text, their hypothetical knowledge is irrelevant. Knowing about someone called Jesus in 111 C.E. cannot serve as valid, historical references to an individual called Jesus, who presumably lived in Galilee some 80 years previously.

If this letter is a forgery, it tells us that the fraudulent act happened much later than the early second century C.E. It informs us that the cult of Christ was now so well established and widely known that it was not necessary to inform anyone that Jesus was a deity known as the "Christ". Had this letter been genuine, Pliny may well have felt the need to explain that the Christ deity was based on the teachings of a Jew who lived some years earlier. The fact that the author does not tell us that implies that he knew his readership already had this information.

Regardless, even if we take the easy way out and just assume that *Ep*. X, 96 is wholly genuine, it does not assist us. Because of the letter's silence, it tells the historian absolutely nothing about the quasi-deity or a possible person–real or imagined. Undeniably, this supposed account by Pliny, which is at best second-hand, constitutes nothing more than hearsay (on occasion extracted under torture). It only confirms (at best), that a religion/cult/sect/superstition called Christianity, existed in *Bithynia et Pontus* by the early second century C.E. The fact is, no-one doubts that Christians or nascent Christians (whatever they called themselves at the time) existed by the late first century C.E. However, simply because a person believes that someone called Jesus existed some eighty years before their own recorded time and activities is not proof that Jesus did in fact exist, say or do the things that are claimed of him. This is not to say that he did not exist. This is to say that a dubious account of Christian activity in the early second century C.E. in a remote Roman province is not evidence of something that was believed to have happen in Judea in the early first century C.E. It is thus, inadmissible as evidence.

2.3 *Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus* a.k.a. Suetonius (c. 69–140 C.E.)

In his *DVC* (*De Vita Caesarum*), *Divus Claudius*, 25, 4[45] Suetonius is claimed to have written:

> He [Claudius] banished from Rome **all the Jews**, who were continually making disturbances at the instigation of one ***Chrestus*** [my insertion and emphasis for clarity].

In addition, Suetonius supposedly wrote of Nero's[46] mistreatment of the Christians in his *DVC*, *Divus Nero*, 16, 2[47]:

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[45] English translation according to Reed and Thomson (Ed.). 1989. *Suetonius: The Lives of the Twelve Caesars; An English Translation, Augmented with the Biographies of Contemporary Statesmen, Orators, Poets, and Other Associates* in *Perseus Digital Library* [Online]. Available: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0132%3Alife%3Dtib. [1 September 2014].

[46] *Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus* (37–68 C.E.).

[47] English translation according to Reed and Thomson (Ed.). 1989. *Suetonius: The Lives of the Twelve Caesars; An English Translation, Augmented with the Biographies of Contemporary Statesmen, Orators, Poets, and Other Associates* in *Perseus Digital Library* [Online]. Available:

> He [Nero] likewise inflicted punishments on the **Christians**, a sort of people who held a new and impious superstition [my insertion and emphasis for clarity].

These two short passages raise a number of interrelated issues and, again, depending on the worldview of the scholar concerned, affect the way their content is ultimately perceived.

Listed below are some of the more common points raised by researchers as regards the reference to Claudius banishing the Jews from Rome. These are grouped and polarised as regards the dominant worldview of the researchers involved:

A review of *De Vita Caesarum*: *Divus Claudius*, 25, 4

Conservative observations

1. Van Voorst (2000: 30–32), feels that it is unlikely that a Christian redactor would view the specific formulation "*Chrestus*" as a reference to Jesus as the Messiah or Christ, let alone inferring that their lord and saviour was alive and serving as the leader of Jewish troublemakers during the reign of Claudius. Therefore, he would have us accept this as a genuine passage written by Suetonius. However, more recent and far more critical research by Boman (2012) clearly undermines some of his findings;

2. Suetonius merely misheard the name (cf. Köstenberger, Kellum and Quarles, 2009: 110), and incorrectly spelled "*Chresto*" (i.e. ablative of *Chrestus*) as "*Christo*";

3. Suetonius was confused (cf. Bruce, 1962: 316; Lane, 1998: 204–206; Köstenberger, Kellum and Quarles, 2009: 110), and erroneously believed the leader of the civic unrest to be alive in Rome at the time. Van Voorst (2000: 38–39) believes that Suetonius is referring to an unknown person called "*Chrestus*" who was still alive in Rome;

4. As supported by the insights of, inter alia, Boyarin (1998: 577–627), many individuals, living in the late first century and early second century of the Common Era, may have themselves as believers, not formally distinguished between certain forms of Judaism and proto-Christianity.

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http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0132%3Alife%3Dtib. [1 September 2014].

Certainly, as late as the third century of the Common Era, Boyarin substantiates that it was still possible for the Roman authorities to confuse a Jewish Rabbi with a practicing Christian. Because of this reality, some scholars, with the notable exception of Brown and Meier (2004), feel that in the case of the *DVC Divus Claudius*, 25, 4 the Roman authorities may not have been able to differentiate between disruptive Jews or Christians. Therefore, because Suetonius mentions "*Christus*", it is possible that he should have spoken of Christians and not Jews;

5. Suetonius is either describing a Christian disturbance in Rome sometime during the reign of Claudius or (cf. Lane, 1998: 204–206; Dunn, 2003: 141–143; Köstenberger, Kellum and Quarles, 2009: 110; and Brown and Meier, 2004: 101), he is describing Jews who were publicly protesting against Hellenised Jews who, at the time, were preaching the Christian gospel and/or that Christ was the Messiah; and

6. This is a valid, unambiguous reference to Jesus (cf. Eddy and Boyd, 2007: 166).

Neutral observations

1. According to Lane (1998: 204), the Latin passage is ambiguous as regards its exact denotation; it could either mean that *only* those specific individuals who were rioting were expelled from Rome or *all* members of that group (i.e. irrespective of whether "*Iudaeos*" refers to Jews or Christians) were expelled from Rome;

2. As supported by, inter alia, Slingerland (1992: 128), it is difficult to apply an exact date to this apparent civil unrest because Suetonius does not place his account according to either a strict chronology or analytical method; rather he groups his writings according to subject or topic. However, it is clear that this event happened sometime between 41 and 54 C.E.;

3. Boman (2012: 355–376) who has examined 41 manuscripts featuring *DVC*, *Divus Claudius*, 25, 4, draws our attention to numerous spelling variations, viz.: "*Cherestro*" as well as "*Chresto*" and even "*Cresto*". In addition he has seen the disputed name written as "*Christo*", "*Cristo*", "Χριστο" and "Χρο". He specifically takes issue with Van Voorst who seems to think that a "*Christo*" version does not exist. He also points out that it is incorrect to believe that "*Chresto*" only occurs either once or only occasionally. Boman (2012: 376) informs us that the occasional Christ-spellings in the manuscripts are most likely the "conjectures" of

later Christian scribes. He also concludes that some 90% of the collected manuscripts employ the more trustworthy spelling of "*Chresto*"–the latter being a proper name (*Chrestus*) and having nothing to do with Jesus.

4. Assuming the same event is being referred to here, historians only have three alternative sources (not always reliable) for pinpointing when the claimed Claudian expulsion of the Jews from Rome most likely took place, viz.:

a. *Claudius or Lucius Cassius Dio Cocceianus* (155–235 C.E.)

In his *Historia Romana,* LX, 6 / 6[48], Dio writes about an event that occurred early in Claudius' reign:

> In the matter of the Jews, who had again increased so greatly that by reason of their multitude it would have been hard without raising a tumult to bar them from the City, he [Claudius] decided not to drive them out, but ordered them to follow that mode of life prescribed by their ancestral custom and not to assemble in numbers [My insertion].

Slingerland (1989a: 307–316), supports a date for this occurrence as early as 41 C.E. Regardless, here we have an alternative account–one where Claudius *does not* expel all the Jews from Rome. Jews are not troublemakers but are considered to be too numerous to meet in public.

b. *Paulus Orosius* a.k.a. Orosius (Fifth Century C.E.)

In his *HAP* (*Historiarum Adversum Paganos*) *Libri VII*, 6 /15–16[49], Orosius writes:

> Josephus reports, "In his ninth year the Jews were expelled by Claudius from the city." But Suetonius, who speaks as follows, influences me more: "Claudius expelled from Rome the Jews constantly rioting at the instigation of Christ [*Christo*, or rather *xpo*]." As far as whether he had commanded that the Jews rioting against Christ [*Christum*] be restrained and checked or also had wanted the Christians, as persons of a cognate religion, to be expelled, it is not at all to be discerned [My insertions].

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[48] English translation according to Foster (Ed.). 1905: 6.

[49] English translation according to Slingerland. 1992. Suetonius *Claudius* 25. 4, Acts 18, and *Paulus Orosius' Historiarum Adversum Paganos Libri VII*: 137. Also, cf. Deferrari (Tr.) 1964. *Paulus Orosius: The Seven Books of History Against the Pagans.*

Slingerland (1992: 137) also clarifies that in the original Suetonius version the name "*Christus*" appears as "*Chrestus*". However, as can be seen, Orosius clearly refers to "*Christus*". This does not mean that Orosius necessarily redacted the name. Other possibilities surely exist.

For example, depending on the condition of the manuscript he worked from, he may have naively assumed that Suetonius had meant "*Christus*" and made the necessary adjustment. It should also be noted that Slingerland confirms that such conservative scholars as Von Harnack (1912: 675–676), Meyer (1923: III: 38) and Jewett (1979: 38) support an interpretation that exonerates Orosius and variously suggest that Orosius was an innocent recipient of misquoted information originating with Julius Africanus and transmitted via a translated version of Jerome's *Chronicle.*

Notwithstanding, it is also well known that Josephus makes no such reference to Claudius expelling Jews in any of his known works. Attempts by scholars such as Eisler (1929: 132), who claim that an early Christian removed the passage because it was considered too offensive are, in hindsight, quite confused, since the reference is not in any way provocative.[50] Had a Christian redactor removed this passage from one of Josephus' works, this could only have occurred after the time (i.e. fifth century C.E.) Orosius supposedly quoted from it. This raises the pertinent question as to why no-one else quotes this text *before* Orosius' time.

Slingerland (1992: 138) proposes that Eisler is probably conflating the claimed Josephan passage with the confirmed quote from Suetonius. The problem with that observation is that even if this is what in fact happened, neither passage is in any way negative–certainly neither of them is couched in such a way that it could not serve some useful purpose for an early Christian apologist. Furthermore, it is surely equally possible to consider that Orosius either deliberately invented this quotation or he simply misquoted his source.

[50] Slingerland (1992: 138) also notes that Eisler is clearly mistaken in his assumptions. Cf. Slingerland. 1992. Suetonius *Claudius* 25. 4, Acts 18, and *Paulus Orosius' Historiarum Adversum Paganos Libri VII*: 127–144.

c. *Acts of the Apostles* 18: 1–3[51] (c. 85–115 C.E.)[52]

Acts 18: 1–3 yields:

> After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them.

Acts 18: 1–3 makes it quite clear that Claudius deported *all* Jews from Rome. Even Brown and Meier (2004: 102), concede that this is somewhat of an exaggeration, estimating that at least 50,000 Jews must have lived in Rome at the time. We might want to assume here, that this banishment occurred because of civil unrest and not as a consequence of some famine as is sometimes alluded to by some sources[53]. However, the reference in Acts does not confirm whether or not the Jews had been involved in any civil disturbances. Slingerland (1992: 133–134) points out that both Acts 18: 2 and the *DVC*, *Divus Claudius*, 25, 4 have much in common.

Figure 1 (below) clearly illustrates that both passages specify that it was Claudius who expelled *all* the Jews from Rome. In short, both texts imply something that is quite hard to believe, viz.: the entire Jewish population was expelled from the city. Slingerland (1992: 133) confirms that the only difference between the two passages is that Acts 18: 2 mentions Aquila and his wife, Priscilla, whereas Suetonius in his *DVC*, *Divus Claudius*, 25, 4 mentions *Chrestus*.

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[51] English (NIV) text according to William D. Mounce and Robert H. Mounce, *The Zondervan Greek and English Interlinear New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 534-5.

[52] The date for Acts is totally dependent on the ideological worldview of the authority concerned. Conservative scholars typically favour early dates (c. 60 C.E.) and try to claim evidence of eyewitness accounts. Whereas the more critical Acts Seminar, by sharp contrast, concludes that Acts was written in c. 115 C.E. In addition they supply evidence that Acts is based on literary models like Homer for its inspiration. Indeed, they cite exact words and phrases from popular stories as evidence of its mythological base. Cf. Smith and Tyson, 2013 and Allen, 2019.

[53] Cf. Bruce, 1962: 309 n. 3.

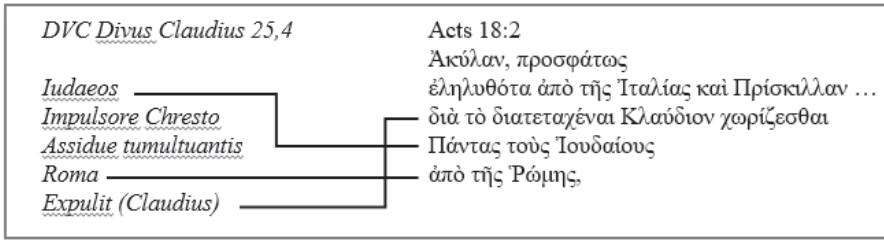

Figure 1
Comparison Between *DVC*, *Divus Claudius*, 25, 4 and Acts 18: 2.
(Diagram based on Slingerland, 1992: 133).

However, Slingerland (1992: 133) also warns his reader that, although both texts appear to be harmonious we must be careful because they lack "the kind of corroborative detail insuring the propriety of the procedure." Assuming that these texts do refer to an actual historical event, their similarity in structure is not sufficient, independent, uncorroborated evidence to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that the historical event occurred.

In addition, the similarity of structure presents a more likely scenario (albeit unprovable). The possibility exists that these two texts may not refer to an actual historical event at all. Rather, one of the passages is simply the model for the other. If the original text was factual, then it follows that its copy (together with its elements of recontextualisation) would still be an interpolation. If the original is itself of dubious provenance, then the copy is also equally invalid as a source of reliable historical data. Here, either passage could be the "original".

However, given that the *DVC*, *Divus Claudius*, 25, 4 passage already has the hallmark of being a likely interpolation, it follows that it would more likely postdate the New Testament book of Acts. In this scenario, the hypothetical, early Christian apologist, apart from having a working knowledge of the Christian tradition, could also have referred directly to Acts 18: 2 as a source of inspiration for his forgery in *DVC*, *Divus Claudius*, 25, 4.

Sceptical observations

1. As confirmed by Boman (2012: 376) and Bruce (1938: 48), *Chrestus* was a common enough slave name at the time. It means something akin to "useful" whereas the Greek name *Chrestos* meant "good".

Much evidence exists that *Chrestos* was employed in respect of a number of deities including Isis, Osiris and Serapis etc. Recently, a bowl was discovered in Alexandria, which has been dated anytime from the second century C.E. to the first century C.E. It bears a Greek inscription (DIA CHRESTOU O GOISTAIS) that translated, reads: "through kindness for the magicians".[54]

> The point is that certainly, in the early years of the Common Era it is possible that Jesus might have been referred to increasingly as *Chrestus* as well as *Christus* because there was already a well-established tradition of referring to deities by this accolade. This does not necessarily mean that the terms were interchangeable.
>
> It is certainly true that the ancient Greeks and Romans anointed the statues of their deities with oil and consequently these deities were also sometimes referred to as *Christus*[55];

2. As supported by Boman (2012: 376) *Chrestus* means "good";

3. Even Paul does not refer to his followers as "Christians" so why would the Romans have bothered to make this subtle distinction so early in their own history? The label "Christian" is thus too premature for Roman commentary in the Julio-Claudian period. The term is not even used by Christians themselves until the second century C.E. when in Acts 11: 26 we are told the term began in Antioch;

4. Jesus is not mentioned in any of Suetonius' other writings;

5. Strangely, Josephus makes absolutely no mention of the claimed Claudian banishment of the Jews in either *War* or *Ant.* This cannot be ascribed to his apprehension at possibly offending his Roman master (i.e. Vespasian), because he happily mentions the banishment of Jews under Tiberius (cf. Slingerland, 1992: 135); and

6. This is obviously a Christian forgery, ascribed to Suetonius to conveniently substantiate the fraudulent writings of *Sulpicius Severus* (c. 363–c. 425 C.E.), who also redacted the works of Tacitus. Specifically, it is Severus' contemptible mendacities that helped to create the false perception (which is still rampant in contemporary times), that the Romans severely persecuted the early church, including

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[54] Viegas. 2012. It is interesting that Viegas incorrectly cites the Greek as DIA CHRSTOU O GOISTAIS and translates it as "by Christ the magician".
[55] Cf. the comments of Sansone (1992: 97–105).

histrionic tales about Nero employing Christians as human torches etc. (cf. Slingerland, 1989b: 133–144).

Discussion

If we accept, merely for the sake of argument, that both the *DVC*, *Divus Claudius*, 25, 4 as well as the *DVC*, *Divus Nero*, 16, 2 are *bona fide* passages written by Suetonius, all we are certain of is that he recorded second-hand accounts, at least five decades after the time of the avowed occurrences, about unwelcome Jews and/or Christians in Rome during the reigns of Claudius and Nero. Moreover, if we totally accept that *Chrestus* is definitely a reference to an individual called either *Christus* or *Chrestus*, we do not know whether this was a real person living in Rome during the reign of Claudius or a reference to a deity. Furthermore, if *Chrestus* was a deity, it still does not tell us anything about a Jew called Jesus living and/or working in Galilee/Judea in the first third of the Common Era.

If we contemplate the possibility of interpolation, then of course the significance of these passages as historically compelling data is completely nullified. In this latter context, the only value of these passages is that their very existence, taken together with other evidence, would support the hypothesis that, inter alia, early Christian apologists felt a desperate need to manufacture such fabrications for two primary reasons:

1. They were at a loss to find any genuine extra-biblical/scriptural historical references to convince their religious opponents that their assumed religious founder had even existed;
2. For didactic purposes, they wanted to show that their religion was the only true faith by virtue of its proven ability to overcome overwhelming adversity rather than being a mere product of largely secular and political orchestration. In this sense they needed accounts of early Christians bravely and willingly suffering enormous torment and mindless persecution for the principles of their faith.

2.4 Publius or Gaius Cornelius Tacitus (c. 56–117 C.E.)

In his *An.* (*Annales*), XV, 44[56], Tacitus writes:

[56] English translation according to Church and Brodribb in *Perseus Digital Library*. [Online]. Available: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.02.0077:book=15:chapter=44 [10 July 2014].

> Such indeed were the precautions of human wisdom. The next thing was to seek means of propitiating the gods, and recourse was had to the Sibylline books, by the direction of which prayers were offered to Vulcanus, Ceres, and Proserpina. Juno, too, was entreated by the matrons, first, in the Capitol, then on the nearest part of the coast, whence water was procured to sprinkle the face and image of the goddess. And there were sacred banquets and nightly vigils celebrated by married women. But all human efforts, all the lavish gifts of the emperor, and the propitiations of the gods, did not banish the sinister belief that the conflagration was the result of an order. Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called **Christians** by the populace. **Christus**, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judæa, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular. Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired [My emphases].

A review of *Annales*, XV, 44

Conservative observations

1. According to, inter alia, Evans (2001: 42), Mercer Dictionary of the Bible (2001: 343), Eddy and Boyd (2007: 127) and Köstenberger, Kellum and Quarles (2009: 110)[57], *Annales*, XV, 44 is an authentic extra-biblical/scriptural reference to Pontius Pilate's execution of Jesus;

2. Crossan (1995: 145) believes that *An*. XV, 44 clearly confirms that Jesus both existed and was crucified. With specific reference to both Tacitus and Josephus, he informs his reader: "That he [Jesus] was crucified is as sure as anything historical can ever be";

[57] Unbelievably, apart from claiming that the passage is far too negative to have been made by a Christian hand, Köstenberger, Kellum and Quarles also claim that because all extant copies of the *Annales* contain this specific passage (i.e. *An*. XV, 44), it is "clearly" authentic. Cf. Köstenberger, Kellum and Quarles, 2009: 109–110.

3. Van Voorst (2000: 33–35) claims that the Latin terms for Christians and Chrestians were equally valid terms to denote the early adherents of Christianity in the second century C.E.;

4. Meier (1991: 168–171), contends that there is *no evidence* to sustain any interpolation theories;

5. In contradiction to the other Christian scholars Brown and Meier (2004: 99), based on their uncritical acceptance of *An.* XV, 44, claim that by 64 C.E. the Romans were quite able to distinguish between Christian and Jew. A similar error, but equal claim of authority in this matter comes from Green (2010: 1);

6. Feldman (1984: 818), Portier (1994: 263) and Van Voorst (2000: 39–53) all concur that most scholars believe *An.* XV, 44 to be wholly authentic; and
7. Holding (2008: 55–56), claims that "very few" would allege that this text is fraudulent. He also falsely claims that the tone of the text is overtly "anti-Christian" and accordingly could not have been written by a Christian.

Sceptical observations

1. According to scholars such as Zindler (1998: 13–14) this is an obvious forgery. Strangely, no-one, not even Clement of Alexandria who made a point of collecting such passages, cited this obviously useful passage until the fifth century C.E., when it suddenly appears, quoted verbatim by Severus (c. 363–c. 425 C.E.), who is already well known for his fraudulent redactions and hyperbole;

2. Wells (1988a: 16–17), notes that, despite not naming the executed man as Jesus, Tacitus employs the implied title "Messiah" as though it were a proper name. Wells quips: "But he could hardly have found in archives a statement such as 'the Messiah was executed this morning'";

3. Zindler (1998: 14) informs his reader that Tertullian[58], who quotes extensively from Tacitus, knows nothing of Nero's persecution, implying this passage is an interpolation;

[58] *Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus* (c. 160–225 C.E.)

4. According to Zara (2009) in an online article, strong evidence exists that the original form of "*Christianos"* should have read as "*Chrestianos"*. This was deliberately altered by an unknown hand in an eleventh century copy of the *Annales*[59];

5. Many scholars (e.g. Wells, 1988a: 16), state the obvious and important point that the prefect Pontius Pilate is incorrectly referred to as a "procurator". This clearly indicates the involvement of a later, ill-informed, interpolator; and

6. According to Zindler (1998: 14) nowhere else in any of his voluminous works, does Tacitus mention Nero's excesses against Christians.

Discussion

If we disregard the glaring warning signs contained in this passage, including the preposterous reference to Pontius Pilate's execution of someone called *Christus,*[60] and guilelessly accept that this passage is authentic, it still does not supply the historian with any tangible evidence for the historical existence of Jesus in the early part of the first century C.E. As stated, and taken at face value, this information is at best a second-hand account that could be equally based upon hearsay and/or popular/traditional folklore.

If one takes a more critical view, the passage has all the signs of a deliberate attempt to paint the Romans as responsible for the indiscriminate and mindless persecution of Christians. Considering that Christians supposedly preached peace and deliberately conducted themselves in ethically upright ways (not to mention being largely indistinguishable from Jews) hardly explains why they are described here as "hating mankind". Again, like the

[59] I.e. The M. II housed in the *Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana* (Library number 68. 2).

[60] The Roman authorities are hardly likely to have kept detailed records of every crucifixion victim in the provinces. Furthermore, if Jesus of Nazareth's execution had indeed been recorded by Pontius Pilate's clerics he would not have been referred to as "Christ". Indeed, if the term "Christ" had been used in Jerusalem in c. 33 C.E. it would not have made any sense to either Jesus of Nazareth or Pilate. Similarly, it would have meant very little to Tacitus in the early second Pontius century C.E. Therefore, if the latter actually wrote "*Christus"* he would have believed it to be a personal name. In this regard, it could never have been based on a Roman record but more likely hails from a Christian tradition.

references made in Pliny's letter to Trajan (*Ep.* X, 96), the Christians are presented as dangerous delinquents whose religion is compared to a mischievous superstition. Their practices are referred to as "abominations" (which, incidentally is a very Judeo-Christian concept), yet paradoxically no tangible evidence or pertinent example of misconduct is supplied as regards the specific nature of their reported criminality.

2.5 Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis (Second Century C.E.)[61]

Papias is credited with having written the *Exposition of the Oracles of the Lord* in which he seemingly recorded information he indirectly received[62] from very early Christian leaders who were active between c. 30 C.E. and c. 70 C.E. This book, which according to Doherty (2009: 466), possibly dates from sometime between c. 110 and 140 C.E., no longer exists. However, (cf. Norelli, 2005), statements supposedly made by Papias are recorded in the writings of a number of later Christian authors, including Irenaeus, Eusebius[63], Jerome, Philip of Side, Andrew of Caesarea, Apollinarius of Laodicea, etc. Many of these can be rejected as being in any way useful because, on occasion, Papias is confused with another Christian apologist (i.e. Quadratus[64]) and/or the author who quotes Papias is prone to making historical errors and/or the author places Papias at an historical time that seriously conflicts with his estimated dates. In most cases the content that is being "remembered" or "quoted" by certain of these authors is quite fantastical. The following reference to Papias by Apollinaris the Younger, (cf. Cramer, 1844. *Catenae Græcorum Patrum in Novum Testamentum:* 12–13)[65] Bishop of Laodicea (c. 315–390 C.E.) which putatively gives an eyewitness account of Judas Iscariot's demise is most informative in this regard:

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[61] Depending on the authority, Papias' dates could be as early as the late first century C.E. or as late as the middle of the second century C.E. A date of c. 95–120 C.E. seems to be the most realistic. Cf. Norelli, 2005: 38–54 and Yarbrough, 1983: 181–191.

[62] O'Connell claims that Papias' information came via "one, or at most two, intermediaries." Cf. O'Connell, 2008a: 73.

[63] Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 263–c. 339 C.E.).

[64] Based on a reading of Eusebius (cf. *Hist. eccl.* IV, 3), Quadratus of Athens was active in c. 124 C.E.

[65] English translation according to Text Excavation [Online]. Available: http://www.textexcavation.com/papias.html#apollinarius [9 July 2014]. This source explains that the text by Apollinarius of Laodicea is as reconstructed from various compiled fragments; cf. Holmes, 2007: 18.

> Judas did not die by hanging, but lived on, having been cut down before he was suffocated. And the acts of the apostles show this, that falling head long he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. This fact is related more clearly by Papias, the disciple of John, and the fourth book of the Expositions of the Oracles of the Lord as follows:
>
> Judas walked about in this world a terrible example of impiety; his flesh swollen to such an extent that, where hay wagon can pass with ease, he was not able to pass, no, not even the mass of his head merely. They say that his eyelids swelled to such an extent that he could not see the light at all, while as for his eyes they were not visible even by a physician looking through an instrument, so far have they sunk from the surface.
>
> His genitals appeared entirely disfigured, nauseous and large. When he carried himself about discharge and worms flowed from his entire body through his private areas only, on account of his outrages. After many agonies and punishments, he died in his own place. And on account of this the place is desolate and uninhabited even now. And to this day no one is able to go by that place, except if they block their noses with their hands. Such judgment was spread through his body and upon the earth.

This preposterous (albeit hilarious) passage is extant in various forms.[66] Doherty (2009: 466) also points out that one of the fragments attributed to and/or concerning Papias (listed as No. 1) is a quotation from Irenaeus dated to the late second century C.E. (i.e. *Haer.* [*Against Heresies*], 5, 33 / 3–4). This fragment has parallels with the content of the pseudepigraphical 2 Baruch (29: 4–8). Here, the passage deals with the fertility of the vineyards that will occur when the future Messiah rules on earth. However, in the Irenaeus text, Papias attributes this concept to Jesus when he forecasts his imminent but future thousand-year reign. Doherty sees this ascription of a first century C.E. Jewish passage (posing as if it was something that Jesus actually said), as evidence that Papias is unreliable as regards which traditions he borrows from in order to give Jesus a voice.

However, to be fair to those who would still have Papias as a *bona fide* historical source, supposedly more reliable references to Papias are certainly to be found in the works of Irenaeus and Eusebius.

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[66] A similar version (cf. Migne (Ed.). 1864. *Expositiones in Acta Apostolorum* in *Patrologiae: Cursus Completus: Patrologiae Gaecae Tomus CXXV*. 522–523) composed by Theophylactus of Ochrid (c. 1050/60–c. 1108 C.E.) also exists. In this latter version, Theophylact claims the first paragraph as his own and accredits Papias with paragraphs two and three. Other shorter versions also exist.

Although Irenaeus originally wrote in Greek, currently most of his work is only available in Latin. The following passage from his *Haer.* 5, 33 / 4[67] is pertinent:

> These things Papias too, who was a earwitness of John and companion of Polycarp, and an ancient man, wrote and testified in the fourth of his books. For there are five books written by him. And he adds, saying: But these things are believable by the believers. And, he says, Judas the traitor did not believe and asked: How therefore will such generations be brought to completion by the Lord? The Lord said: Those who come into those [times] will see.

In his *Hist. eccl.* (*History of the Church*), III, 39 / 1–4 (published in c. 313 C.E.), one reads Eusebius' quotation, ostensibly taken from Papias' prologue to his now lost *Exposition of the Oracles of the Lord*[68]

> *Hist. eccl.* III, 39 / 1:
>
> And there are extant five writings of Papias which are given the title of Exegesis of the Oracles of the Lord. Of these Irenaeus too makes mention as his only writings, thus saying as follows: These things Papias too, who was a **earwitness of John and companion of Polycarp**, and an ancient man, wrote and testified in the fourth of his books. For there are five books arranged by him.

> *Hist. eccl.* III, 39 / 2:
>
> It was Irenaeus who wrote these things. But Papias himself rather, according to the preface of his volumes, **by no means reveals himself to have been either an earwitness or an eyewitness of the holy apostles**, but teaches by the words that he says that he received the things of the faith from those who knew them.

---

[67] English translation according to Roberts and Rambaut. 1885. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1. Revised and edited for New Advent by Knight in *New Advent.org* [Online]. Available: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103533.htm [16 May 2014].

[68] English translation according to New Advent [Online]. Available: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250103.htm. [21 May 2014].

Hist. eccl. III, 39 / 4:

> [Papias continues:] And if anyone chanced to come along who had followed the elders, I inquired as to the words of the elders, what Andrew or what Peter had said, or what Philip or what Thomas or James or what John or Matthew or any other of the disciples of the Lord [had said], the things which both Aristion and the elder John, disciples of the Lord, were saying. For I did not suppose that things from books would profit me as much as **things from a living and remaining voice**.

A review: *Haer.* 5, 33 / 4 and *Hist. eccl.*, III, 39 / 1–4

Conservative observations

1. O'Connell (2008a: 73 and 81) explains that Papias' work is not explicable unless Jesus actually existed[69];

2. Jones (2007: 148) claims that the testimony of Papias verifies that the type of authorial traditions that were cited by Irenaeus existed long before the mid to late second century of the Common Era. Consequently, he believes that Papias faithfully recorded stories that he heard (albeit exaggerated). He also contends that Papias may well have recorded oral traditions about the gospels that he heard some twenty years after the last of the *NT* gospels was written.

3. Ehrman (2012: 98) holds up Papias as an essential source for ascertaining the historical existence of Jesus;

4. Bauckham (2006: 417) and O'Connell (2008a: 82) claim that because Papias' prologue mentions, inter alia, Andrew, Philip and Thomas, he must have had first-hand knowledge of John's Gospel;

5. Bauckham (2006: 417) also claims that the "elder John" mentioned by

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[69] A good indication of O'Connell's (2008a: 79) all-pervading worldview may be gleaned by his statement that "Those who deny the existence of Jesus ('Christ-mythers') are prepared to reject a vast number of historical facts which are readily accepted by virtually every competent historian". He then (2008a: 85) reveals to his reader those who he claims qualify to be "competent historians" by making the unsubstantiated claim that they number among the "thousands of individuals with credentials in ancient history or New Testament studies". Indeed, according to O'Connell (2008a: 85), only two individuals may be singled out from this vast and all-encompassing collective of suitably qualified scholars but who erroneously believe that Jesus never existed, viz.: Robert M. Price and Richard C. Carrier.

Papias is none other than the author of John's gospel; and

6. Gundry (2005: 50) as also mentioned by Wells (1997: 74) and Sim (2007: 283–291), claims that Papias wrote during the period 101–108 C.E. Thus somehow proving that it was *possible* for the apostle John to have survived long enough to have met Papias personally.

Neutral observations

1. Although the text is open to interpretation and it is unclear what the exact relationship is between the various groups that Papias claims to have had exposure to, it is clear enough to put forward two acceptable scenarios:

   a. The seven disciples who are mentioned in the synoptic gospels, viz.: Andrew, Peter, Philip, Thomas, James, John and Matthew plus an unknown individual called Aristion and the "elder John" are *all* to be understood as being a *collective* of "elders". These in turn were subsequently known by those who met at least some of them at a later stage.
   b. The seven individuals who are mentioned in the synoptic gospels, viz.: Andrew, Peter, Philip, Thomas, James, John and Matthew are the "disciples". They were all subsequently known to a separate group called the "elders" (i.e. Aristion and the elder John). These in turn were subsequently known by those who met them at a later stage.

   These permutations are mostly supported by O'Connell (2008a: 75–76). In this context the following diagram (Figure 2) which is employed by numerous scholars, is loosely based on his thinking:

2. O'Connell (2008: 77) points out that Papias clearly refers to the seven disciples in the past tense whereas he gives the impression that he communicated directly with Aristion and the "elder John" in his own lifetime. Sim (2007: 292) concurs that the employment of the present tense (*legousin*) intimates that both John and Aristion were alive at the time Papias wrote. Thus O'Connell and others (e.g. Gundry 2005: 52–55), favour the first possibility (cf. Figure 2) that Papias spoke *directly* with someone who either knew a disciple of Jesus and/or an "elder/presbyter" who personally knew a disciple of Jesus. Whereas Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* III, 39 / 5 and 6) and scholars such as Sim (2007: 292–293) support the interpretation of two distinct groups and thus seem to be more likely to favour the second possibility (cf. Figure 2).

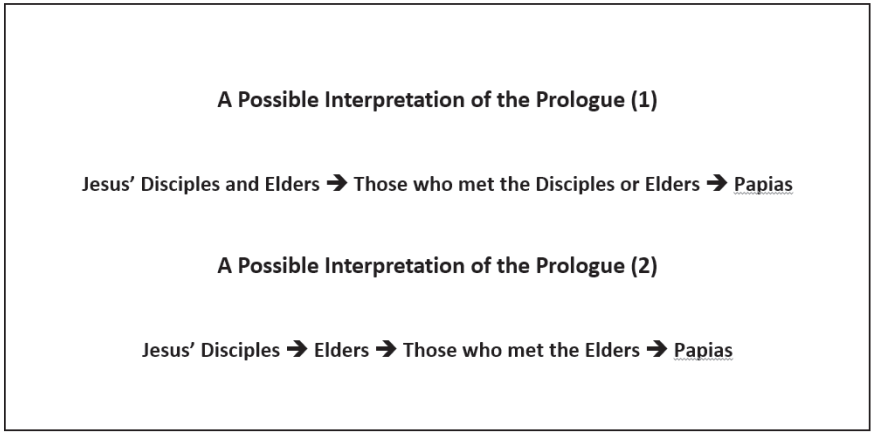
A Possible Interpretation of the Prologue (1)
Jesus' Disciples and Elders ➔ Those who met the Disciples or Elders ➔ Papias
A Possible Interpretation of the Prologue (2)
Jesus' Disciples ➔ Elders ➔ Those who met the Elders ➔ Papias

Figure 2
Diagram showing two possible interpretations
based on a reading of *Hist. eccl.* III, 39 / 4

Sceptical observations

1. A number of authors, point out that Eusebius is himself somewhat critical of Papias as a reliable authority. Indeed, Eusebius states in *Hist. eccl.* III, 39 / 13: "For he [Papias] appears to have been of very limited understanding, as one can see from his discourses" [My insertion]. In addition, what often seems to happen when Papias is presented (especially in Eusebius' *Hist. eccl.* III, 39 / 1–4) as a reliable source for an historical Jesus, is that the rest of Eusebius' passages connected with Papias are often overlooked and thus the full context is lost.

   In this regard, a reading of what follows on from *Hist. eccl.* III, 39 / 1–4, (i.e. *Hist. eccl.* III, 39 / 5–16[70]) is most informative:

Hist. eccl. III, 39 / 5:

It is worthwhile observing here that the name John is twice enumerated by him. The first one he mentions in connection with Peter and James and Matthew and the rest of the apostles, clearly meaning the evangelist; but **the**

[70] English translation according to New Advent [Online]. Available: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250103.htm. [21 May 2014].

other John he mentions after an interval, and places him among others outside of the number of the apostles, putting Aristion before him, and he distinctly calls him a presbyter.

Hist. eccl. III, 39 / 7:

And Papias, of whom we are now speaking, confesses that he received the words of the apostles **from those that followed them**, but says that he was himself a hearer of Aristion and the presbyter John. At least he mentions them frequently by name, and gives their traditions in his writings. **These things, we hope, have not been uselessly adduced by us** [My emphases].

Hist. eccl. III, 39 / 8:

But it is fitting to subjoin to the words of Papias which have been quoted, other passages from his works in which he relates some other wonderful events which he claims to have received from tradition.

Hist. eccl. III, 39 / 11:

The same writer gives also other accounts which he says came to him through unwritten tradition, certain strange parables and teachings of the Saviour, and some other more mythical things.

Hist. eccl. III, 39 / 13:

For he appears to have been of very limited understanding, as one can see from his discourses. But it was due to him that so many of the Church Fathers after him adopted a like opinion, urging in their own support the antiquity of the man; as for instance Irenæus and any one else that may have proclaimed similar views [my emphasis].

Hist. eccl. III, 39 / 14:

Papias gives also in his own work other accounts of the words of the Lord on the authority of Aristion who was mentioned above, and traditions as handed down by the presbyter John; to which we refer those who are fond of learning. But now we must add to the words of his which we have already quoted the tradition which he gives in regard to Mark, the author of the Gospel.

Hist. eccl. III, 39 / 15:

"This also the presbyter said: Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately, though **not in order**, whatsoever he remembered of the things said or done by Christ. **For he neither heard the Lord nor followed him**, but afterward, as I said, he followed Peter, who adapted his teaching to the needs of his hearers, but with no intention of giving a connected account of the Lord's discourses, so that Mark committed no error while he thus wrote some things as he remembered them. For he was careful of one thing, not to omit any of the things which he had heard, and not to state any of them falsely." These things are related by Papias concerning Mark [My emphasis].

Hist. eccl. III, 39 / 16:

But concerning Matthew he writes as follows: **"**So then Matthew wrote the **oracles in the Hebrew language**, and every one interpreted them as he was able." And the same writer uses testimonies from the first Epistle of John and from that of Peter likewise. And he relates another story of a woman, who was accused of many sins before the Lord, which is contained in the Gospel according to the Hebrews. These things we have thought it necessary to observe in addition to what has been already stated [My emphasis].

2. Sim (2007: 292) points out that there is no record of someone called "Aristion" being a disciple of Jesus;

3. Sim (2007: 292) questions why Papias refers to the second John as an "elder" but neglects to give Aristion a similar designation;

4. Doherty (2009: 467), in reference to *Hist. eccl.* III, 39 / 15 and 16, confirms that Papias, by his own admission, had not personally seen the "Lord's discourses". Further, as regards "Mark", Papias received his information from the "presbyter". It is also ambiguous whether or not this situation applies to Matthew's "oracles". However, given that Papias claims that the oral recollection is greater than a written text seems to prove that he did not have access to any written documents. In this context, in *Hist. eccl.* III, 39 / 4, Papias is recorded as having stated "For I did not suppose that things from books would profit me as much as things from a living and remaining voice". Thus, all this information came to Papias second-hand and was based on memory. This confirms Papias' reliance on memory and not actual documents;

5. Doherty (2009: 468) points out that in *Hist. eccl.* III, 39 / 16, Papias could not have been referring to the gospel of Matthew when he refers to the "oracles in the Hebrew language" as the gospel of Matthew was originally composed in Greek. Also, *Hist. eccl.* III, 39 / 15, Papias cannot be referring to the gospel of Mark as he states that he is talking about Peter's recollections of "things said or done by Christ" which are "not in order". This lack of arrangement rules out the gospel of Mark; and

6. Wells (1997: 74) confirms and explains that thanks to Irenaeus, the traditions of the early Christian church accepted that the apostle John managed to live right up until the reign of Trajan (i.e. 98–117 C.E.). Of course this means that Gundry (2005: 50) has no substantial evidence to justify an early second century date for Papias' works and therefore cannot justify the first century C.E. apostle John actually meeting Papias personally.

7. Ehrman (2006: 8) confirms that there are difficulties with taking Papias' statements at face value. We cannot simply assume that in Mark we possess an historically accurate account concerning the accomplishments of Peter. Indeed, certain aspects of Papias' supposed testimonial are not at all believable. Ehrman (2006: 8) gives the example of the claim that Mark wrote down "everything" that Peter recalled about Jesus' words and deeds. If Mark really wanted to record everything that Peter related to him over several years, it would surely have required somewhat more than the 20 pages that constitute the present Mark Ehrman (2006: 8) also questions whether Papias is even referring to Mark. This is also an assumption since we know that originally this manuscript had no title and did not record the name of the actual author. It was later Christian scribes who assumed that this was the work of Mark. Similarly, with the gospel of Matthew Papias claims a document that contained the sayings of Jesus in Hebrew. In fact, the current gospel of Matthew was originally written in Greek and contains far more than the sayings of Jesus. On this issue, Ehrman (2006: 9) states that whatever Papias says is "widely, and rightly, discounted by scholars as pious imagination rather than historical fact".

Discussion

Ignoring all the evidence that clearly highlights the total unreliability of Papias as a primary source, a more credulous person might want to assume all of the following to be correct:

1. Papias has been correctly quoted by Eusebius;
2. Papias did speak with either the followers of the elders or directly with the elders;
3. The elders (i.e. Aristion and elder John, regardless of who they might be in reality) had actually met with an Andrew, a Peter, a Philip, a Thomas, a James, a John and a Matthew; and
4. Each of these specific individuals, i.e. Andrew, Peter, Philip, Thomas, James, John and Matthew were the same "disciples" as described in the gospels.

Then it follows (ignoring for a moment that Eusebius himself tells his reader that Papias "received the words of the apostles from those that followed them" and thus also intimates that Aristion and the presbyter John were not themselves apostles), that at least *some* of the individuals described in the gospels were recorded as having met with Jesus. This does not mean that they did so in actual fact and certainly Papias did not meet with them personally–at best he met persons who had met other persons *claiming* to be apostles.

The only additional problem here is that despite the claims of, inter alia, Bauckham (2006), we have no real way of knowing if Papias had read any of the gospels we know today, let alone John. The upshot of this is that even if we are trusting enough to believe that a reference to a reference of something that might or might not be true is proof that someone met with persons who claimed to be the apostles of Jesus we still have no hard evidence or useful biographical detail concerning an historical Jesus.

2.6 *Mara bar Serapion* (fl. 73 C.E.)

Mara bar Serapion was supposedly a Stoic philosopher, possibly a monotheist but certainly not a Jew or Christian (Cf. Brock, 1998: 709; Merz and Tielman, 2008: 107–134). He originated from the Roman province of Syria (i.e. sometime between c. 73 C.E. and the third century C.E.).[71] He

[71] Brock dates the letter from "soon after" 70 C.E. up to c. 260 C.E. Cf. Brock. 1998: 709.

wrote a letter to his small son (also called *Serapion*) whilst in Roman captivity. The original letter was composed in Syriac and the manuscript that contains a copy of it (variously dated between the sixth and seventh centuries C.E.) is currently housed in the British Library (*BL Add.* 14658)[72]. This very long letter makes brief mentions of a "Wise King". For the sake of clarity, I have reproduced the relevant section below:

> For what benefit did the Athenians obtain by putting Socrates to death, seeing that they received as retribution for it famine and pestilence? Or the people of Samos by the burning of Pythagoras, seeing that in one hour the whole of their country was covered with sand? **Or the Jews by the murder of their Wise King, seeing that from that very time their kingdom was driven away from them?** For with justice did God grant a recompense to the wisdom of all three of them. For the Athenians died by famine; and the people of Samos were covered by the sea without remedy; **and the Jews, brought to desolation and expelled from their kingdom, are driven away into every land.** Nay, Socrates did "not" die, because of Plato; nor yet Pythagoras, because of the statue of Hera; **nor yet the Wise King, because of the new laws which he enacted** [My emphases].

A review of the Letter of *Mara bar Serapion*

Conservative observations

1. More typically, conservative scholars see this letter containing an obvious reference to Jesus. In this regard, Christian scholars such as Van Voorst (2000: 53–55); Köstenberger, Kellum and Quarles (2009: 110) acknowledge that this letter refers to the death of Jesus;

2. Habermas (1996a: 217) feels that this reference may well support the occurrence of a widespread darkness in the land that coincided with Christ's crucifixion; and

3. However, other conservative researchers, such as Evans (2001: 41) are slightly more cautious, admitting that the references are somewhat ambiguous.

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[72] Original English translation from the Syriac according to Bar-Serapion. 2014. A Letter of Mara, Son of Serapion in *Early Christian Writings*. [Online]. Available: http://earlychristianwritings.com/text/mara.html. [13 May 2014].

Sceptical observations

1. Some Christian scholars[73] are understandably concerned by the letter's implications that the "Wise King" is to be remembered *solely* by virtue of his renowned life and the laws that he left behind rather than for his qualities as a deity who continues to live on after his death and resurrection;

2. The highly sceptical Till (1995), brings another very important nuance to the debate. He strongly infers that it would behove the more critically-minded thinker to first verify the reliability of *Mara bar Separion*, as regards his knowledge of other historical events, before blindly accepting his comments regarding the "Wise King" as conclusive and unquestionable. By way of example, he refers to *Mara bar Separion's* reference in the letter to the "men of Samos" burning Pythagoras. Till (1995), (with reference to the *Encyclopedia Americana*, 1994, Vol. 23: 45), confirms that in actuality, Pythagoras (originally resident on the island of Samos), relocated to the Greek colony of Croton in Southern Italy in 530 B.C.E. Later, he died in what is now Metaponto in Italy; and

3. Lowder (2000) confirms that *Mara Bar-Serapion* does not provide independent confirmation of the historicity of Jesus. Consequently, his testimony is worthless.

Discussion

Scholars like Köstenberger, Kellum and Quarles (2009: 110), could be accused of misleading their readers. Certainly, they unabashedly state that *Mara bar Serapion* wrote a letter "that compared Socrates, Pythagoras, and Jesus". In fact, no-one called "Jesus" is mentioned anywhere in the letter. They also erroneously state that the "letter describes the execution of Jesus at the instigation of the Jews some time not long before the fall of Jerusalem." In fact, neither Jesus nor the fall of Jerusalem nor an execution nor errant Jews are mentioned in the letter. These "researchers" do not even bother to say something like "based on what is written in the letter it might be conceivable to believe that the 'Wise King' refers to someone like Jesus". Instead, they deliberately inveigle their unwary reader into thinking that this letter directly refers to Jesus by name. In addition, they deliberately misrepresent the meaning of the written text. For example, nowhere in the letter are the Jews directly or overtly blamed for the death of their "Wise

[73] Cf. Chilton and Evans, 1998: 455–457.

King". In addition, no mention is made of the fall of Jerusalem or the destruction of the Temple.

The letter simply states that as a consequence of the murder of the "Wise King" the Jews "were driven away into every land". Whether the Jews committed the actual murder is not clear and there are a number of other more reliable historical instances[74] when Jews were driven from their homeland that seem to have been conveniently overlooked. It should be obvious to anyone, that even if these scholars were, by some chance, correct in their romantic assumptions and this episode did really refer to the destruction of the second Temple (c. 68–70 C.E.), they still have overlooked the fact that their avowed founder of Christianity was:

1. not a king in the secular sense; and

2. "murdered" (by their own reckoning) at least three decades *before* this event (i.e. traditionally, the crucifixion of Jesus took place in c. 30–33 C.E. whereas the Temple was destroyed in c. 68–70 C.E.). The letter clearly states that the Jews were removed from their land the very moment their "Wise King" was murdered (i.e. "from that very time").

Furthermore, no-one is in any position to ratiocinate what was in the mind of the original author (i.e. *Mara bar Serapion*). We do not know what levels of knowledge he had concerning Jewish and/or Christian history/culture. Accordingly, *bar Serapion's* "Wise King" tale could have been a reference to any potted account relating to literally anyone including not only Jesus but even *Aristobulus* II (c. 100–49 B.C.E.).[75] The latter individual, incidentally, was both High Priest and King during the closing years of the Hasmonean Dynasty.

Clearly, *Mara bar Serapion's* grasp of historical fact is also proven to be highly questionable. Yet conservative and fundamentalist scholars are seemingly quite eager to employ his ambiguities as substitutes for hard

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[74] The Masoretic Text supplies the well-known accounts of, inter alia, three forced deportations of Jews to Babylon: firstly, in c. 597 B.C.E. which involved king *Jehoiachin*; secondly, in c. 587 B.C.E. which involved king *Zedekiah*; and thirdly, (possibly an equally likely event for *Mara bar Serapion*), that occurred in 582 B.C.E. which involved the murder of *Gedaliah* by *Ishmael* (who granted, was a Jew).

[75] Cf. Aristobulus II in *The Jewish Encyclopaedia* [Online]. Available: http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/1769-aristobulus-ii [13 May 2014].

evidence for an historical record of Jesus' existence.

Nonetheless, even assuming that *Mara bar Serapion* was really referring to some capricious notion he had concerning Jesus; "King of the Jews" ; and/or the recounted religious beliefs of Christians who might even have been his contemporaries, *bar Serapion* might well have gleaned his knowledge from unsolicited opinions passed on to him from any number of unreliable sources.

It is quite safe to state here that, as a consequence of Köstenberger, Kellum and Quarles' dominant worldview, they (and many like them) have simply jumped to the conclusion that this letter refers specifically to the events leading up to the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and the expulsion of the Jews from Judea by the Roman oppressors in the latter half of the first century C.E.

Regardless, even if it transpires that *Mara bar Serapion* had intimate knowledge of the Christian faith (which is dubious), given that he lived at least 35 years (possibly even centuries) after the purported time of Jesus, his letter still offers the historian absolutely nothing that can substantiate the gospel accounts.

2.7 *Thallos* a.k.a. Thallus (unknown dates)

Great doubt exists as regards the time in which Thallus lived.[76] Certainly, it is quite possible that a number of individuals by this name might have existed and accordingly it is not always clear which one is being specifically mentioned. In addition, the claimed references to the one who is supposed to have had reliable knowledge of Jesus is, more than likely, early Christian invention. Irrespective, purely for the sake of complete accuracy and transparency, the claims that Thallus is a reliable extra-biblical/scriptural authority will be dealt with (albeit) briefly.

What is of importance to this debate concerns George Syncellus[77], the well-known ninth-century Byzantine chronicler and ecclesiastic, who composed a chronicle of world history[78], in which he quoted directly from a number of earlier chroniclers. Here, Syncellus (*Sync. Chron*. Chapter 391) refers to

[76] Carrier already gives a highly detailed account concerning the unreliability of employing Thallus as a valid historical source. Cf. Carrier. 1999.
[77] George Syncellus (*Constantinopolitanus*) (d. after c. 810 C.E.).
[78] i.e. *Ecloga Chronographica.*

Africanus' reference to both Thallus and Phlegon in the context of Jesus' passion and resurrection as described in Mark 15: 33[79]:

> At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour.

In this context, Syncellus[80] states the following:

> A most terrible darkness fell over all the world, the rocks were torn apart by an earthquake, and many places both in Judaea and the rest of the world were thrown down. In the third book of his *Histories,* Thallos dismisses this darkness as a solar eclipse. In my opinion, this is nonsense.
>
> For the Hebrews celebrate the Passover on Luna 14, and what happened to the Saviour occurred one day before the Passover. But an eclipse of the sun takes place when the moon passes under the sun. The only time when this can happen is in the interval between the first day of the new moon and the last day of the old moon, when they are in conjunction. How then could one believe an eclipse took place when the moon was almost in opposition to the sun? So be it. Let what had happened beguile the masses, and let this wonderful sign to the world be considered a solar eclipse through an optical (illusion). Phlegon records that during the reign of Tiberius Caesar there was a complete solar eclipse at full moon from the sixth to the ninth hour; it is clear that this is the one. But what have eclipses to do with an earthquake, rocks breaking apart, resurrection of the dead, and a universal disturbance of this nature?

A review of the references to *Thallos*

Conservative observations

1. Bruce (1959) and Miller (1996) both date Thallus' work to 52 C.E. and claim that he produced a chronicle, tracing the history of Greece from the Trojan War up to his own time. Both scholars seem to base their mid-first century C.E. dating to a reference by Josephus (i.e. *Ant.* 18, 6, 4 / 167), concerning one of Emperor Tiberius' freedmen who they both naively assume was called "Thallus". However, Miller (1969) goes

[79] English (NIV) text according to William D. Mounce and Robert H. Mounce, *The Zondervan Greek and English Interlinear New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 202.

[80] English translation according to Adler and Tuffin (Eds). 2002. *The Chronography of George Synkellos,* and Mosshammer (Ed.). 1984. *Georgius Syncellus, Ecloga Chronographica*, in *George Syncellus: Excerpts from "The Chronography"* in *The Tertullian Project*. [Online]. Available: http://www.tertullian.org/rpearse/syncellus/#E1 [25 June 2014].

somewhat further than Bruce when he, inter alia, backs up this early date with two references to Africanus[81]. Africanus is quoted by Eusebius (*Praep. ev.* X, 10 / 4)[82] as follows:

> After the seventy years of the Captivity Cyrus became king of Persia, in the year in which the fifty-fifth Olympic festival was held, as one may learn from the Bibliotheca of Diodorus, and the histories of Thallus and Castor, also from Polybius and Phlegon, and from others too who were careful about Olympiads: for the time agreed in all of them.

Later, in the same chapter (i.e. *Praep. ev.* X, 10 / 8)[83] Africanus is quoted as follows:

> For both the historians of Athens, Hellanicus and Philochorus who wrote The Attic Histories, and the writers on Syrian history, Castor and Thallus, and the writer on universal history, Diodorus the author of the Bibliotheca, and Alexander Polyhistor, and some of our own historians recorded these events more accurately even than all the Attic writers.

In this regard, Miller (1996) claims that Thallus must have been active a generation before Africanus. Furthermore, merely because Africanus quotes him, Miller believes that Thallus must have been an important historian of a very high calibre.

2. Craig (2014), who presents himself as a rational Christian, admits that Thallus' dates are ambiguous yet seems quite happy to accept the majority consensus view that Thallus confirms the historicity of the darkness at noon;

3. Habermas (1996a: 243–250) goes to great lengths to demonstrate that this reference (and others) proves that either "the Christian gospel or at least an account of the crucifixion, was known in the Mediterranean region" by the mid first-century C.E.

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[81] *Sextus Iulius Africanus* a.k.a. Africanus (c. 160–c. 240 C.E.).

[82] English translation according to Gifford (Tr.) 1903. Eusebius of Caesarea: *Praeparatio Evangelica* (Preparation for the Gospel), in *Tertullian.org.* [Online]. Available: http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/eusebius_pe_10_book10.htm [11 August 2014].

[83] English translation according to Gifford (Tr.) 1903. Eusebius of Caesarea: *Praeparatio Evangelica* (Preparation for the Gospel), in *Tertullian.org.* [Online]. Available: http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/eusebius_pe_10_book10.htm [11 August 2014].

Sceptical observations

1. According to Carrier (1999) Thallus is first recorded by Theophilus of Antioch in c. 180 C.E. In addition, George Syncellus[84] quotes directly from a number of earlier chroniclers, one of who (as has already been discussed) was none other than Africanus (c. 160–c. 240 C.E.). It is also well known, that Africanus had a strong influence on Eusebius[85].

   If one is generous and blindly accepts this ambiguous reference to something that an individual called Thallus might have written at an earlier date (i.e. sometime prior to the third century C.E.), we still have the problem that Africanus correctly finds fault in Thallus' reasoning when he naively allows for an antithetical situation where simultaneously a Full Moon and solar eclipse were visible.

   Carrier (1999) expertly sums up most of the sceptical camp's concerns and points out that the references have discernible mythic tinges and can undoubtedly be distrusted. He also confirms that this text is not mentioned anywhere else outside of Christian rhetoric.

   Apart from the fact that we have no way of confirming this as a *bona fide* eyewitness report, and given the far-fetched nature of this account, only someone who gullibly believed in the occurrence of both unnecessary as well as unnatural geological and cosmic events could claim this as being an extra-biblical/scriptural reference to Jesus;

2. Carrier (2012a: 188) confirms that historians do not know when Thallus wrote. Conservative Christian claims that this occurred in c. 52 C.E. are based solely on a conjectural emendation of a corrupted text. It should be emphasised that the source of this claim is *Ant.* 18, 6, 4 / 167 which translated reads "Now there was one Thallus, a freed-man of Caesar" needs to be unpacked. This is extraordinary, because no mention is made of a *Thallos* in the original Greek text, yet the most common English translations repeatedly yield this enigmatic name. The reason, it transpires, is due to a deliberate alteration made by Hudson[86] in his posthumous translation of 1720 (Oxford University publication in two volumes), wherein he felt that the Greek term "*allos"* made no sense and

[84]George Syncellus (*Constantinopolitanus*) (d. after c. 810 C.E.).
[85]Cf. Carrier, 2012c: 185–191.
[86]I.e. the English classical scholar: John Hudson (1662–1719).

based purely on a personal speculation changed it to *Thallos*.[87]

3. Carrier (2012a: 188) also draws our attention to an Armenian translation of Eusebius' *Pantodape historia* a.k.a. the *Chronicle,* in which Eusebius says he employed three volumes from Thallus covering the period from the sack of Troy (c. 1200 B.C.E.) to the 167th Olympiad (i.e. c. 109 B.C.E.). Carrier confirms that, if authentic, this would mean that Thallus wrote about events ending in c. 109 B.C.E. and accordingly far too early to coincide with a mid-first century C.E. event;

4. Lee (2014) reminds his reader that due to damage to the Syncellus manuscript, Thallus' true name is not known;

5. Lee (2014) points out that "third-hand hearsay is not compelling proof of a worldwide darkness that *everyone* should have noticed";

6. Lowder (2000) confirms that since there are no extant copies of the Thallus material, we do not know his sources and we do not know if Thallus was really a witness to Jesus;

7. Wells (1988a: 18) with reference to Bruce (1952: 30) exclaims that for anyone to employ Thallus as evidence that a Christian Passion narrative existed by 52 C.E. is "fantastic"; and

8. If we assume that someone like a Thallus or a Phlegon had in fact referred to an actual eclipse, it is most informative to involve a scientific and purely factual perspective. The information supplied below is not meant to be the last word on eclipses but merely serves to show the realities of the situation and the more likely historical context that is often overlooked by many biblical scholars even in more contemporary times (cf. Allen, 2018):

   We have to assume that the claimed eclipse (*a la* Eusebius, Africanus, Thallus and Phlegon etc.) was visible in Jerusalem within a few years of the hypothetical date of the crucifixion of Jesus (i.e. c. 33 C.E.).

   Further, we must assume that this purely natural and astronomical event was a total eclipse of the Sun by the Moon and not merely some partial or annular eclipse. Indeed, if we allow for annular eclipses, due to the distance of the Moon from the Earth, the lunar diameter appears smaller

[87]Cf. Carrier, 1999.

from Earth, and accordingly the Sun is not totally occluded. In short, we need ideally, a period of measurable/noticeable time when there was a complete masking of the Sun and the sky went totally dark, preferably on or around noon, in Jerusalem.

As should be well known and as is confirmed by NASA[88] an eclipse of the Sun can only occur during a New Moon. This is as a result of the Sun and the Moon being in almost perfect conjunction as seen from Earth. This alignment of the three astronomical bodies is referred to by astronomers as syzygy.

According to NASA[89] and based on a 5000-year period of solar eclipses, there are a minimum of two (i.e. 72.5% of the time) and a maximum of five (i.e. 0.5 % of the time) solar eclipses in any one calendar year. It is accepted that in the first century C.E. of the 248 solar eclipses that occurred, only 58 (i.e. 23.7%) were total eclipses. Of the 248 eclipses, only a small portion (2.6%) were central and non-central[90] (one limit) events whereas 97.3% were central (two-limit) events.

Therefore, as the eclipse is synonymous with the Moon's shadow (umbra) as it traces a line across the Earth's surface, it is totally impossible for a total eclipse over the entire planet let alone three solid hours in one spot. Certainly, an occasion for total darkness of the sky is extremely rare for even a small percentage of the earth's surface. When it does occur, although the entire process may last up to two hours as viewed from one location, the longest period possible for a total event (i.e. complete darkness) is some 7.4 minutes. More normally this event lasts anywhere between two to five minutes.

Reproduced below is a NASA-based table (Table 1) which details the shortest and longest solar eclipses of the first century C.E. This

[88] Cf. NASA Eclipse Website [Online]. Available: http://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/SEcat5/SE0001-0100.html [17 July 2014].
[89] Cf. NASA Eclipse Website [Online]. Available: http://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/SEcat5/SE0001-0100.html [17 July 2014].
[90] According to NASA, a central solar eclipse occurs when the central axis of the Moon's shadow strikes the Earth's surface. A partial or penumbral eclipse occurs when the axis of the Moon's shadow misses the Earth. Cf. NASA Eclipse Website [Online]. Available: http://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/SEcatmax/SE4001-5000MaxH.html [17 July 2014].

encompasses all types of solar eclipses, regardless of whether they were total, partial, annular or hybrid:

Extrema Type	Year	Date	Duration
Longest Annular Solar Eclipse	96 C.E.	04 November	11m18s
Shortest Annular Solar Eclipse	40 C.E.	24 October	00m08s
Longest Total Solar Eclipse	96 C.E.	10 May	06m47s
Shortest Total Solar Eclipse	31 C.E.	03 November	01m04s
Longest Hybrid Solar Eclipse	41 C.E.	19 April	01m24s
Shortest Hybrid Solar Eclipse	86 C.E.	31 May	00m08s
Largest Partial Solar Eclipse	68 C.E.	19 May	-
Smallest Partial Solar Eclipse	94 C.E.	01 July	-

Table 1
Extreme Durations and Magnitudes of Solar Eclipses in the First Century C.E.
(Based on a table from NASA Eclipse Website 2014)[91]

According to the NASA data, the nearest solar eclipse (albeit the shortest total eclipse of the first century C.E.) to have occurred relative to c. 33 C.E. was a total solar eclipse in 31 C.E. that lasted all of one minute and four seconds. This event did not occur anywhere near Jerusalem.

Based on NASA data it is also possible to surmise that the longest time any total solar eclipse lasted in the first century C.E. was 6 minutes and 47 seconds. That event occurred over the Americas on 10th May 96 C.E. and, thus, did not occur anywhere near Jerusalem.

[91] Cf. NASA Eclipse Website [Online]. Available: http://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/SEcat5/SE0001-0100.html [17 July 2014].

Other eclipses (i.e. both annular and total) which at a stretch of the imagination scholars might want to be considered as candidates for Thallus and Phlegon's total darkness at noon and which occurred between 25 and 45 C.E. as calculated by NASA (2014) are presented below (cf. Table 2):

Year C.E.	Date	Time of Greatest Eclipse	Type of Eclipse	Central Duration	Closest Location of Greatest Eclipse to Jerusalem
23	03 October	16: 31	Annular	05m 07s	Zimbabwe
24	28 March	13: 52	Total	04m24s	Madagascar
24	21 September	17: 57	Annular	08m05s	Libya
26	06 February	10: 26	Annular	01m12s	Border of Egypt and Sudan
26	01 August	12: 55	Total	02m53s	Botswana
27	26 January	16:02	Annular	07m34s	Somalia
27	22 July	04: 29	Total	06m31s	Bay of Bengal
28	15 January	15: 44	Annular	07m01s	Southern Indian Ocean
28	10 July	21: 28	Total	03m30s	France
29	24 November	12: 15	Total	01m59s	Qatar
30	21 May	04: 10	Annular	06m09s	Australia
30	14 November	03: 37	Total	04m08s	Southern China
31	10 May	04: 46	Annular	04m26s	East of Sri Lanka
31	03 November	18: 26	Total	01m04s	Tierra del Fuego
33	19 March	13: 40	Total	04m06s	Indian Ocean

34	01 September	13: 52	Annular	04m20s	Chad
35	26 February	20: 29	Hybrid	00m31s	New Mexico, USA
35	21 August	21: 43	Hybrid	01m13s	South Pacific Ocean
37	05 January	10: 17	Annular	06m40s	Antarctica
37	01 July	21: 23	Total	03m54s	Ontario, Canada
37	25 December	12: 47	Annular	04m15s	South Africa
38	21 June	09: 34	Hybrid	03m54s	India
38	14 December	22: 33	Hybrid	01m19s	West of Mexico
40	24 October	16: 37	Annular	00m08s	East of Tierra del Fuego
41	19 April	07: 54	Hybrid	01m24s	Thailand
41	14 October	00: 26	Annular	05m47s	South Pacific Ocean
42	08 April	21: 32	Total	05m05s	South America, centred west of Peru
42	03 October	01: 27	Annular	08m56s	North Pacific Ocean

Table 2
Table Showing All Annular, Hybrid and Total Eclipses
That Occurred Between 25 and 45 C.E.
(Information based on various tables supplied by NASA 2014)[92]

[92] Cf. NASA Eclipse Website [Online]. Available: http://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/SEcat5/SE0001-0100.html [17 July 2014].

It is clearly evident that the nearest total eclipse to have occurred in or around Jerusalem in a twenty-year window would have to have been 24 November 29 C.E. Here a total solar eclipse, centred on Qatar for a maximum of one minute and 59 seconds was also briefly visible along a line which crossed, inter alia, Romania, Turkey, Syria, Saudi Arabia and India. This event reached its peak at 12: 15 in Qatar.

As a result, anyone standing in Jerusalem on that day would have only seen the Moon's penumbra and accordingly, they may have witnessed a partial eclipse, where at its peak (i.e. 08: 44) the Sun would have been occluded by 90.55% for a few seconds. Table 3 gives the exact details of this event based on the NASA calculation:

Jerusalem: 24th November 29 C.E.	**Partial Solar Eclipse Magnitude: 0.921 Obscuration: 90.55%**
Event	Time
Start of partial eclipse:	07: 22: 14.4
Maximum partial eclipse:	08: 44: 11.7
End of partial eclipse:	10: 12:04.4

Table 3
Details of a Partial Solar Eclipse Observed in Jerusalem on 24th November 29 C.E.
(Table adapted from NASA Eclipse Website, 2014)[93]

Considering that the synodic period of the Moon's orbit (i.e. as viewed from Earth) is exactly 29.5305882 days, a solar eclipse can only happen some two weeks before or after the beginning of Passover. In addition, Passover always occurs in the spring period in Israel (i.e. April/May). Therefore, if the gospel accounts of an apparent total solar eclipse are accurate, then any crucifixion (including that claimed for Jesus could not possibly have occurred at Passover.

[93] Cf. NASA Eclipse Website [Online]. Available: http://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/SEsearch/SEsearchmap.php?Ecl=00291124 [17 July 2014].

For the sake of argument, one might also want to hypothesise the following, viz.:

1. The partial eclipse that occurred on the early morning of 24 November 29 C.E. somehow served as an inspiration for subsequent exaggerated accounts of total darkness for three hours in the afternoon; and
2. There was an actual crucifixion of Jesus that occurred on that day.

However, if the above premises are both true then it follows that:

1. If Jesus was crucified at noon and taken down three hours later, no darkness ever occurred during the process.
2. If there was ever a brief darkening of the sky there was neither a crucifixion on a Passover festival nor did it occur at noon.
3. If the crucifixion happened at the Passover there was no darkness.

Therefore, if the crucifixion at Passover account in the *NT* is accurate then no solar eclipse occurred. Finally, if one (purely for the sake of interest) attempts to find an eclipse, as calculated by NASA, which occurred in the months of April or May in the Middle East sometime between 23 and 43 C.E. we see that the closest possible factual event was an annular eclipse centred near Sri Lanka on 10 May 31 C.E. The latter could not possibly have caused a total eclipse in Jerusalem. Neither could the event in 29 C.E. which occurred some six months after Passover and which could not possibly have caused total darkness for the observers in Jerusalem.

We are left with the only conclusion possible, namely any account of a total solar eclipse at *any* time during *any* activity in or around Jerusalem between 23 and 43 C.E. including Roman crucifixions and the like, would have to be entirely and undeniably fictitious.

Discussion

As with most of these claimed extra-biblical/scriptural accounts, even if one impetuously accepts on pure faith that the account is somehow true, it tells the historian absolutely nothing that can confirm the life and ministry of Jesus.

2.8 Phlegon of Tralles (fl. c. 80 C.E.)

Hansen (1996: xvi and 215), confirms that Phlegon of Tralles is perhaps best known for having written the *Olympiads* presumably sometime in the early second century C.E. Regardless, this work is now only partially preserved via the writings of, inter alia, Origen[94] and Eusebius. In this context, Origen makes a reference to Phlegon in his *Cels.* II, 14[95], where he is quoted as follows:

> Now Phlegon, in the thirteenth or fourteenth book, I think, of his Chronicles, not only ascribed to Jesus a knowledge of future events (although falling into confusion about some things which refer to Peter, as if they referred to Jesus), but also testified that the result corresponded to His predictions. So that he also, by these very admissions regarding foreknowledge, as if against his will, expressed his opinion that the doctrines taught by the fathers of our system were not devoid of divine power.

Origen makes another reference to Phlegon in his *Cels.* II, 33 and 59:

> And with regard to the eclipse in the time of Tiberius Cæsar, in whose reign Jesus appears to have been crucified, and the great earthquakes which then took place, Phlegon too, I think, has written in the thirteenth or fourteenth book of his Chronicles…He [Celsus] imagines also that both the earthquake and the darkness were an invention; but regarding these, we have in the preceding pages, made our defence, according to our ability, adducing the testimony of Phlegon, who relates that these events took place at the time when our Saviour suffered.

Jerome wrote in his Chronicle: 202nd Olympiad: 18 and 19[96]:

> Phlegon, who is an excellent calculator of Olympiads, also writes about these things, writing thus in his thirteenth book: In the fourth year, however, of Olympiad 202, an eclipse of the sun happened, greater and more excellent than any that had happened before it; at the sixth hour, day turned into dark night, so that the stars were seen in the sky, and an earthquake in Bithynia toppled many buildings of the city of Nicaea. These things [are according to] the aforementioned man.

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[94] *Origenes Adamantius* (184/185–253/254 C.E.).
[95] English translation according to The Works of Origen [Online]. Available: http://www.john-uebersax.com/plato/origen2.htm [1 June 2014].
[96] English translation based on the online edition at the Tertullian): http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/jerome_chronicle_03_part2.htm

- In addition, as has already been ascertained we also have Syncellus' reference (*Ecloga Chronographica*, chapter 391) to Africanus' reference to both Thallus and Phlegon where we are told, in the context of the passion and resurrection of the Christ, that "Phlegon records that during the reign of Tiberius Caesar there was a complete solar eclipse at full moon from the sixth to the ninth hour…".

A review of the references to Phlegon

Conservative observations

1. According to Habermas (1996a: 217), Phlegon was a secular historian who was born c. 80 C.E. and who lived during the second century C.E.; and

2. McDowell (1979: 84) takes it for granted that Phlegon is a reliable source for the historicity of Jesus.

Sceptical observations

1. Carrier (1999) supports the assertion that Phlegon could only have written in the decade c. 140–149 C.E. and is already well known for relating fanciful stories. In this connection he concludes that it would not be out of the ordinary for Phlegon to borrow such a tale from Christian literature;

2. Carrier (1999) refers to the well-known classical scholar, Routh[97] who questions why Africanus, having just criticised Thallus goes on to view Phlegon in a more positive light when both authors state the self-same concept. Routh also noticed grammatical evidence that would seem to indicate interpolation of the Phlegon reference in Africanus' text. The upshot of this is that the testimonial to Phlegon appears to be both grammatically and logically out of place;

3. Wells (1988a: 4) feels that Phlegon was merely reporting on an eclipse that most likely occurred on 24 November 29 C.E. and that it was Africanus who linked this astronomical reference to the claimed supernatural events at Christ's passion;

[97] Martin Joseph Routh (1755–1854). Cf. Routh. 1846.

4. Lee (2014) emphasises that like Thallus, Phlegon's major works, the *Chronicles* and the *Olympiads*, have been lost. At best we only have unsubstantiated references made by early Christian apologists like Origen, Eusebius and Julius Africanus. Here again the latter writer is himself referenced by an eighth century apologist (i.e. George Syncellus); and

5. Lee (2014) reminds his reader that Phlegon lived at least a century after the events he claims personally to have witnessed (i.e. as cited by later writers).

Discussion

Taken at face value, it would appear that Phlegon is at best confirming the traditional Christian crucifixion date of c. 33 C.E. with a flawed reference to the ancient Olympiad dating system[98]. In addition, assuming that he was a non-Christian, non-partisan commentator, he either said or is *made* to say, that he verifies the accuracy of certain unspecified and unrecorded predictions made by Jesus. It is also clear that Origen's primary purpose for employing this reference is to prove that Christianity is based on divine authority, proven by fulfilment of prophecy.

His secondary reason for quoting Phlegon is to confirm that Jesus' death was a major, if not global, event of supernatural proportions. It is less likely that Origen sees this account as important evidence for Jesus' historical existence. Eusebius, on the other hand seems to be more concerned with the latter issue, viz.: the need for historical validation for Jesus' existence. It should also be seen as significant that, on two separate occasions, Origen cannot quite remember where he had seen the information that he happily paraphrases for posterity, whereas Eusebius knows exactly where the information resides and quotes Phlegon verbatim.

As with Thallus, even if one rashly accepts on pure faith that the reference to Phlegon is accurate, it still tells the historian very little that can authenticate the life and ministry of Jesus.

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[98] Based on the assumption that the first Olympiad dates from 776–772 B.C.E. it follows that the 202nd Olympiad commenced in 32 C.E. and thus, the fourth year of the 202nd Olympiad was in 35 C.E. Strictly speaking *Phlegon* should have been quoted as stating that the solar eclipse and associated earthquake occurred in the first year of the 202nd Olympiad.

2.9 Lucian of Samosata (*c.* 125–after180 C.E.)

Lucian of Samosata is well known as a non-Christian, possibly Greco-Syrian rhetorician and satirist who produced scores of books covering a wide range of topics. In his largely fictional and certainly satirical *DMP* (*De Morte Peregrini*) his chief character (a parody of the Cynic philosopher *Peregrinus Proteus*) dissolutely exploits Christian kindness and charity. In this overtly sardonic context, Lucian of Samosata (*DMP*, 11–13)[99] writes:

> It was now that he [i.e. *Peregrinus Proteus*] came across the priests and scribes of the Christians, in Palestine, and picked up their queer creed. I can tell you, he pretty soon convinced them of his superiority; prophet, elder, ruler of the Synagogue–he was everything at once; expounded their books, commented on them, wrote books himself. They took him for a God, accepted his laws, and declared him their president. The Christians, you know, worship a man to this day–the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account. Well, the end of it was that Proteus was arrested and thrown into prison. This was the very thing to lend an air to his favourite arts of clap-trap and wonder-working; he was now a made man. The Christians took it all very seriously: he was no sooner in prison, than they began trying every means to get him out again–but without success. Everything else that could be done for him they most devoutly did. They thought of nothing else. Orphans and ancient widows might be seen hanging about the prison from break of day. Their officials bribed the gaolers to let them sleep inside with him. Elegant dinners were conveyed in; their sacred writings were read; and our old friend Peregrine (as he was still called in those days) became for them "the modern Socrates." [My insertion].

A review of *De Morte Peregrini*

Conservative observations

1. Holding (2008: 69) states that the reference to Lucian is underrated;

2. Holding (2008: 70) states that there is no doubt that Lucian is referring to Jesus because Christians never worshipped anyone else. On this issue, Habermas (1996: 206) confirms that the reader is told that "Jesus was worshiped by Christians" and further, that they believed themselves to be immortal;

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[99] English translation according to Fowler and Fowler (Trs). 1949. *The Works of Lucian of Samosata,* Vol. IV. Oxford: Clarendon Press: 82.

3. Habermas (1996c) tells his reader that Lucian's text "also related that Jesus introduced new teachings", that Jesus' followers had sacred texts and lived according to his laws, and that Jesus was crucified as a result of these teachings;

4. Holding (2008: 70) corroborates that we must accept Lucian's credibility because he also wrote a treatise entitled: *The Way to Write History* in which he expressed the ideal that history abhors falsehood and that the historian's task is to tell the truth. Holding concludes that "Lucian…clearly held historical accuracy in high esteem";

5. Holding (2008: 71) informs his reader that because Lucian moved in the most educated of circles and possibly communicated with the leading figures of his time, he was in a good position to know whether or not Jesus was an historical person; and

6. Habermas (1996a: 207) believes that because Lucian refers to Jesus as a "sage", he is being compared to Greek philosophers and wise men.

Discussion

Even if Lucian was highly educated, erudite and trustworthy, he tells the historian very little that can authenticate the life and ministry of Jesus. At best he describes the behaviour of select Christian groups that he may have witnessed at first-hand in the late second century C.E.

2.10 *Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus* (c. 160–225 C.E.)

Tertullian is better known for his rigorous efforts to see Christianity given the same tolerance that other sects enjoyed in the Roman Empire, during the periods of discrimination by certain non-Christian groups in the late second century C.E. In this latter regard, his most famous book is *Apol.* (*Apologeticus* or *Apologeticum*), often referred to as *The Apology of Tertullian for the Christians*. In Apol. V[100] Tertullian writes:

[100] English translation according to Mayor and Souter (Eds) 1917. *Q. Septimi Florentis Tertulliani Apologeticus.* Tr. Alexander Souter: xx; 496 in *Tertullian.org* [Online]. Available:

> Unless a god shall have been acceptable to man, he shall not be a god: man must now be propitious to a god. Accordingly Tiberius, in whose time the Christian name first made its appearance in the world, laid before the senate tidings from Syria Palaestina which had revealed to him the truth of the divinity there manifested, and supported the motion by his own vote to begin with. The senate rejected it because it had not itself given its approval. Caesar held to his own opinion and threatened danger to the accusers of the Christians. Consult your records: you will there find that Nero was the first emperor who wreaked his fury on the blood of Christians, when our religion was just springing up in Rome.

A review of *Apologeticus*

Conservative observations

1. Eusebius refers to Tertullian and this incident in his *Hist. eccl.*; and

2. A number of letters from Pontius Pilate to Tiberius and vice versa are recorded which support the claims of Tertullian;[101]

Sceptical observations

1. Tertullian repeats popular Christian legends as though they are historical fact. Thus he is a very unreliable witness. Consider his comments on the Apostle John being boiled in oil and surviving in his *DPH*, XXXVI[102]:

> What a happy Church is that whereon the Apostles poured out their whole Doctrine together with their blood; where Peter suffers a passion like his Lord's, where Paul is crowned with the death of John [the Baptist], whence John the Apostle, after being immersed in boiling oil and taking no hurt, is banished to an island [i.e. Patmos] [my insertions].

2. Fraudulent letters[103] supposedly written by, inter alia, Pilate to Tiberius

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http://www.tertullian.org/articles/mayor_apologeticum/mayor_apologeticum_07translation.htm [3 September 2014].

[101] Cf. Elliott, 2005: 206–208.

[102] English translation according to Greenslade. 1956. *Early Latin Theology: Selections from Tertullian, Cyprian, Ambrose, and Jerome*, Library of Christian Classics V: 19–64.

[103] Quasten informs his reader that "[t]he oldest piece of Christian Pilate literature seems to be 'The Report of Pilate to the Emperor Claudius', which is inserted in Greek into the late *Acts of Peter and Paul* and is given in Latin translation as an appendix of the *Evangelium Nicodemi*. It is probable that this report is identical with that mentioned by Tertullian. If that is true, it must have been composed before the

and *vice versa* were not always accepted by early Christians themselves. Consider Eusebius' remarks in his *Hist. eccl*. IX, 5 / 1[104] where he refers to the deceitful acts that the emperor Maximinus and his cronies (e.g. Theotecnus) undertook to discredit the Christians, including writing false accounts about Pontius Pilate and Jesus. Specifically, he states:

> Having therefore forged Acts of Pilate and our Saviour full of every kind of blasphemy against Christ, they sent them with the emperor's approval to the whole of the empire subject to him, with written commands that they should be openly posted to the view of all in every place, both in country and city, and that the schoolmasters should give them to their scholars, instead of their customary lessons, to be studied and learned by heart.

One excellent example of a supposed correspondence between Pilate and Claudius Caesar is to be found in the *Acts of Peter and Paul*–an apocryphal book dated to the fourth century C.E.[105]

> Pontius Pilate to Claudius, greeting. There has lately happened an event which I myself was concerned in. For the Jews through envy have inflicted on themselves, and those coming after them, dreadful judgments. Their fathers had promises that their God would send them his holy one from heaven, who according to reason should be called their king, and he had promised to send him to the earth by means of a virgin. He, then, when I was procurator, came into Judæa. And they saw him enlightening the blind, cleansing lepers, healing paralytics, expelling demons from men, raising the dead, subduing the winds, walking upon the waves of the sea, and doing many other wonders, and all the people of the Jews calling him Son of God. Then the chief priests, moved with envy against him, seized him, and delivered him to me; and telling one lie after another, they said that he was a wizard, and did contrary to their law. And I, having believed that these things were so, gave him up, after scourging him, to their will; and they crucified him, and after he was buried set guards over him. But he, while my soldiers were guarding him, rose on the third day. And to such a degree was the wickedness of the Jews inflamed against him, that they gave money to the soldiers, saying, say his disciples have stolen his body. But they, having taken the money, were not able to keep silence as to what had happened; for they

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year 197 A.D., the time of Tertullian's *Apologeticum*." Cf. *Patrology*, Vol. 1: 116.

[104] English translation according to Church History (Book IX) in *New Advent* [Online]. Available: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250109.htm [7 July 2014].

[105] English translation according to Walker (Tr.). 1886. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. VIII. Eds Roberts, Donaldson and Coxe. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co. Revised and edited for New Advent by Knight (http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0815.htm).

> have testified that they have seen him (after he was) risen, and that they have received money from the Jews. These things, therefore, have I reported, that no one should falsely speak otherwise, and that you should not suppose that the falsehoods of the Jews are to be believed.

Discussion

The extant letters written by Pontius Pilate to either Tiberius or Claudius and vice versa are obvious forgeries. All of these accounts are well known as fraudulent and worthless as historical sources.

2.11 The *Talmud* and *Tosefta*

The *Talmud* and *Tosefta* as reliable historical documents

Due no doubt to the possible contemporaneousness of specific information contained within their numerous volumes, concerning the presumed historical existence of Jesus, both Christian believers and their detractors alike, have for many centuries, seen the *Tosefta* and the *Talmud* as important arbiters of truth. For the Christian believer they seem at first glance, to offer promising extra-biblical/scriptural evidence that Jesus actually existed and for the more sceptically minded individual, the lack of evidence (if proven) confirms what history has already shown (i.e. no eye witness accounts exist outside of the pseudepigraphical gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John)[106].

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[106] Ehrman (2009: 14-15), confirms that, inter alia, the canonical gospels should be considered to be as equally apocryphal as those writings that were not sanctified in 325 C.E. at the Council of Nicaea:

> One of the most amazing and perplexing features of mainstream Christianity is that seminarians who learn the historical-critical method in their Bible classes appear to forget all about it when it comes time for them to be pastors. They are taught critical approaches to Scripture, they learn about the discrepancies and contradictions, they discover all sorts of historical errors and mistakes, they come to realize that it is difficult to know whether Moses existed or what Jesus actually said and did, they find that there are other books that were at one time considered canonical but that ultimately did not become part of Scripture (for example, other Gospels and Apocalypses), they come to recognize that a good number of the books of the Bible are pseudonymous (for example, written in the name of an apostle by someone else), that in fact we don't have the original copies of any of the biblical books but only copies made centuries later, all of which have been altered. They learn all of this, and yet when they enter church ministry they appear

The *Talmud* (i.e. both the *Talmud Bavli* as well as the *Talmud Yerushalmi*) and kindred texts (i.e. the *Tosefta*) speak, inter alia, of events that are believed to have occurred in the latter years of the first century B.C.E. as well as the first decades of the first century C.E. Accordingly, it is often considered that it might be possible that information referring to an historical personage, whose life gave rise to the later Christian concept of Jesus, might be gleaned by a careful examination of its contents.

However, for the sake of complete accuracy, before reviewing these kinds of notions it is necessary for the sake of precision and clarity to carefully and methodically consider the status of the *Talmud* as regards any claim that it is a reliable, primary source and/or witness to particular events that may have occurred before, during or even after the time in question. It will also be necessary to determine to what degree the *Talmud* may in any way be considered to be an objective or accurate record of history. In this regard, the very development of the *Talmud* itself offers us insight into its unlikely value as a reliable witness to historical fact.

The *Torah*

It is accepted (cf. *JSB*, 2004: 1 and *EJ* 1982: 1235), that the *Torah* which is interpreted variously as "teaching", "instruction" or "law", was originally recounted as part of an oral tradition that may stretch as far back as c. 1200 B.C.E.. Originally, much of the information it now contains was most likely handed down orally, generation after generation, and in due course, with the advent of writing, it was written down for posterity and ultimately edited and composed into its present unity–notwithstanding the fact that it is arranged into five books, viz.:

- Genesis: *Sefer bereishit*;
- Exodus: *Sefer ve'eleh shemot*;
- Leviticus: *Sefer vayikra* or *Torat kohanim*);
- Numbers: *Sefer bemidbar*; and
- Deuteronomy: *Sefer devarim*.

Here (cf. *JSB*, 2004: 3), it can be clearly shown that the final compilation of its written form or *Torah she-bi-khtav* with its often contradictory reiterations, was redacted from at least four distinctive sources, each of

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to put it back on the shelf.

Cf. Ehrman, 2009.

which is identifiable on the grounds of such aspects as literary style, theological stance and employed vocabulary.

Respected authorities, like Brettler (*JSB*, 2004: 6) and Rosenberg (1984: 36–37), confirm that scholarly research supports the notion that this process of amalgamation did not happen overnight; most probably occurring in several stages over an extended period of time. The definitive outcome of this redaction, which also must have witnessed the removal and loss of substantial material, is claimed to have occurred during or shortly after the time of the Babylonian exile (586–538 B.C.E.). Regardless, this herculean labour resulted in arguably the longest piece of literature to have ever emanated from the ancient Near East, not only in terms of its sheer volume but also in terms of its historical scope and range of incorporated literary genres.

In this regard, (cf. Rosenberg, 1984: 34), the *Torah* is replete with, inter alia, epigrams, folk tales, poetry, prophecies, quasi-historical narratives, remnants of myths, satires, songs, and even wisdom literature. However, what was considered far more important, especially from a more traditional Jewish perspective, is that the *Torah* was an embodiment of either divine or divinely inspired law.

Torah she'b'al peh

Even so, *Torah she-bi-khtav* was quite inadequate as a comprehensive legal code and an oral tradition continued (even after the written *Torah* was finalised), that dealt with such issues as the specific application of the divine law within the context of the reality of everyday Jewish life abounding as it still does with countless possibilities. As confirmed by the *EJ* (1982: 1236) this originally, oral tradition is known as *Torah she'b'al peh* and may be translated as “oral instruction” or “oral law”. Steinsaltz (1976: 11) explains that the fundamental role of the oral law was to both preserve and communicate the meaning of words found in the *Torah she-bi-khtav* that may have changed over the course of time.

The actual role of transmitting the oral law increasingly became the responsibility of the *kohanim* (priestly tribe), the levites and other, better educated members of Jewish society. Certainly by the sixth century B.C.E. well-read persons who were considered to be learned in matters pertaining to the *Torah* and known as the *tofsei ha-Torah* were already in existence. These learned individuals specialised in the study of *Torah* and the interpretation of the written law.

It is also known that during the period of Persian rule in Israel and Judea (c. 539–332 B.C.E.)–a time when it is quite possible much of the final redaction and canonisation of biblical/scriptural texts may have occurred; an eminent council came into existence known as the *Knesset gedolah* or "Great Assembly". The names of the scribes (*sofrim*) who operated within this institution remain unknown and accordingly biblical scholars often refer to this period as the "age of the anonymous scribes" (cf. Steinsaltz, 1976: 14).

The *Halakhot*

As ratified by the *EJ* (1982: 758–759) and Stern in the *JSB* (2004: 1863–1875) these *sofrim* also started the process of studying and reorganising the written material that had been generated by the oral tradition. In this regard they developed what was to be termed *midrash halakhah* or halakhic exegesis or interpretation. Following the destruction of the Temple in c. 70 C.E.[107] the rabbis gathered and transmitted the laws learned from earlier sages.

An unwieldy assortment of written material was increasingly generated over the centuries as the oral law was transmitted from master to student through oral instruction. It soon became apparent that the sheer volume of information could not be easily committed to memory.

Originally the *Torah she'b'al peh* had adhered closely to the *Torah she-khtav* and in this context the latter often served as a mnemonic aid which assisted the scholar in recalling a particular *halakhah*.

The *Mishnah*

As confirmed by Elman in *JSB* (2004: 1844–1863) during the first two centuries of the Common Era (also known as the Tannaitic period), it is widely accepted that educated rabbis (the successors of the Pharisees), mindful of the precarious situation that Judaism now found itself with the loss of both the Temple in Jerusalem and the *Sanhedrin*, started working towards finding more lasting means by which they could convey and cultivate new laws through an established convention for interpretation.

Conventional wisdom asserts that between c. 20–200 C.E. (with heightened activity towards the concluding years of the second century C.E.), the various rabbis (i.e. *tannaim*) working on this issue, had reached a point

[107] According to Jewish chronology, this watershed event more likely took place in c. 68 C.E.

where the collective of these various writings could be evaluated and ultimately redacted into a single work. This task was spearheaded by Rabbi *Yehudah haNasi*, who worked in consultation with the various *Yeshivot* (academies) from c. 200–220 C.E. The result of this initiative was the publication of a study book of rabbinic law called the *Mishnah* which can be translated as "repeating" or "teaching". Even here, it was the original intention that this written publication should be employed for the purposes of instruction and ultimate memorisation in order that the threatened oral tradition might recover and ultimately continue.

Here the content of the *Mishnah* is divided into six *Sedarim* (orders) and *masekhot* (tractates) wherein various statements made by different rabbis are compared against (albeit in seeming conversation with), the learned opinions of other rabbis. Certainly, it has been pointed out by certain scholars that from the *Mishnah* onward, the *Torah She'b'al peh* ("oral *Torah*") evolves into what could be better termed "conversational *Torah*".

The *Tosefta*

According to, inter alia, the *EJ* (1982: 1283–1285) during the same period, a possibly parallel attempt at producing a compilation of oral law was also underway. This process resulted in the *Tosefta* which was edited in the third century C.E. by Rabbis *Hiyya* (a.k.a. Hiyya the Great) and *Oshaiah* (a.k.a. Oshaiah [or Hoshaia] the Great). Here the standard opinion is that most of the *Tosefta* was written shortly after the *Mishnah* was redacted. However, recent scholarship (i.e. since 1989), by Hauptman (2005: 109–132), reveals that the *Tosefta* draws on source material earlier than the later material in the *Mishnah* and it may well be that parts of the *Tosefta* predate the *Mishnah*.[108]

Nonetheless, it is a Halakhic work which corresponds in structure almost exactly to the *Mishnah*, with the same divisions for *Sedarim* (orders) and *masekhot* (tractates). It is mainly written in Mishnahic Hebrew, with some Aramaic.

In many ways the *Tosefta* acts as a supplement to the *Mishnah* and here *Tosefta* means "supplement" or "addition". The text of most of the *Tosefta* agrees nearly verbatim with the *Mishnah*, with only slight variances. For example, the *Tosefta* offers authors' names for laws that remain anonymous in the *Mishnah*; it also enhances the *Mishnah* with further commentaries and

[108] Cf. Hauptman, 2005:109–132.

debates. The *Tosefta* as we have it today functions like a commentary on unquoted Mishnahic material; it offers both additional haggadic as well as midrashic material, and it sometimes contradicts the *Mishnah* in deciding *Halakha* or in declaring in whose name a law was given. Rashi[109] tells us that the *Tosefta* was considered to be less authoritative than the *Mishnah* in his commentary on *Talmud Sanhedrin* 33a.[110]

During the three or four centuries following the *Mishnah*'s publication, the rabbinic sages whose work was eventually compiled in the documents which were to become known as the *Talmud*, analysed each *halakhah* in the *Mishnah*. They compared the various statements of numerous rabbis to determine how these different positions could be seen as parts of a consistent legal theory. They harmonised the opinions in the *Mishnah* to other early opinions that were not included in the *Mishnah*. They tried to show the relationship between the various opinions in the *Mishnah* to their presumed derivations from the *Torah*.

The *Gemara*

Ben-Sasson (1976: 351) confirms that on the completion of the *Mishnah*, certain rabbis in *yeshivot* situated in both Babylonia (as well as in and around what had once been known as the Roman province of *Iudeae*)[111] continued to analyse and comment on its contents. By employing the *Mishnah* as the focal point, the rabbis produced the *Gemara* which (cf. *EJ*, 1982: 368–369) taken together with the *Mishnah* resulted in the *Talmud* proper. Thus the *Gemara* (a term which stems from "*gamar*" and which means "to finish" or "to complete"), comments on the *Mishnah* and thus finalises the *Talmud*.

The rabbis of the *Gemara* are known as *Amoraim* (singular: *Amora*). As is well known, two *Talmuds* were produced, viz.: the *Talmud Bavli* and the *Talmud Yerushalmi*. The latter was produced in a relatively short period of time in Galilee in the province of Judea under Roman oppression and political turmoil including the Great Jewish Revolt (66–70 C.E.) the *Kitos* War (115–117 C.E.), and *Bar Kokhba* (132–135 C.E.), whereas the *Talmud Bavli* was developed over a far longer period in Babylonia in a relatively

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[109] *Shlomo Yitzchaki* (1040–1105 C.E.).

[110] Cf. Shachter (Ed.) s.a. Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Sanhedrin, Folio 33a, Tr. Freedman and Epstein, in *Come and Hear* [Online]. Available: http://www.come-and-hear.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_33.html. [13 May 2014].

[111] This territory was sardonically renamed *Syria Palaestina* by the Roman emperor Hadrian after *Bar Kokhba* of 135 C.E. (Cf. Ben-Sasson, 1976: 351)

calm and stable environment.

Thus, there are two sets of commentaries (*gemarot*) (cf. *EJ*, 1982: 368–369) based on the same *Mishnah*. Firstly, there is the *Talmud Yerushalmi* (which is often referred to simply as the *Yerushalmi*). Secondly, there is the *Talmud Bavli* (which is sometimes called the Palestinian Talmud or the *Bavli*). The *Gemara* of the *Talmud Yerushalmi* is composed in Western Aramaic whereas the *Gemara* of the *Talmud Bavli is* written in Eastern Aramaic.

The *Gemara*, as redacted in the *Talmud*, serves as a verification of the detailed examination of the *Mishnah*. This critique is designed to yield a meticulous appreciation of the complete significance of the *Mishnah*. In the *Talmud*, the examination is effectively undertaken by means of a progression of questions and suppositions. In the *Gemara* each and every facet of the text contained in the *Mishnah* is handled as a topic of painstaking analysis as regards use of language, logic and legality.

The *Gemara* is not only limited to an analysis of the text found in the *Mishnah* itself. It also brings in sources from the Mishnahic era, which were not included in the *Mishnah* compendium, which are called *Tosefta* (additions); the Talmud refers to these as *beraitot*, ("outside"). The *Gemara* also supplements the *Mishnah* with haggadic (or aggadic) materials and biblical expositions, and is a source for both history and legend.

Everywhere and throughout the *Talmud*, the rabbis worked with several basic assumptions. Given a controversy between two early sages, the goal was not to determine according to whom was the practical law; the goal was to make sense of each opinion. This underlying assumption that opinions are not simply fickle choices but the rational decisions of sages confronting differing ways of describing legal reality is the hallmark of the Talmudic process. In this regard its employment solely as a reliable reference to actual historical events is severely limited–a point seemingly lost on most contemporary Christian scholars. The rabbis expressed this primary concept of presenting a legal reality in Jewish society succinctly: "both these and those are the words of the living God" or, as it may also be translated, "both these and those are the living words of God." [112]

[112] Cf. *Talmud Eruvin* 13b. [Online]. Available: http://halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Eiruvin.pdf [15 July 2014].

Historical reliability

Talmudic literature has long been considered a potential source for reliable proof that Jesus is mentioned outside the synoptic gospel accounts. However, given the detailed preamble, it should be quite self-evident that this view needs to be seriously reconsidered. Thus, although it might contain a *modicum* of historical information that may (or may not) be contemporary with the purported life and times of Jesus, it will be recalled that the *primary* purpose of the *Talmud* Bavli*, Talmud Yerushalmi* and *Tosefta* was the recording of the basic principles of the Oral Law. In this latter regard, it would be a grave mistake to try to see either the *Talmud* or the *Tosefta* as some kind of reliable, chronological history of events.

Because of the great volume of commentaries that were generated in its evolution, in its final form, although still an enormous collection of writings, it is in fact a highly condensed version of the information that must have once existed to create it in the first place. In order to save space and reduce its bulk, only the most important (albeit précised) aspects of the various commentaries have survived.

Christian and Jewish censorship

Related to this is the reality that at various times in its development it was also subject to censorship, both from within the Jewish community as well as from later Christian authorities (cf. *EJ*, 1982: 767–771). For example, by medieval times, many Jewish texts were placed on the *Index of Forbidden Texts* and in 1264 C.E. certain passages considered to be offensive to the Christian Church were expurgated. Again, in 1559 C.E., the entire *Talmud Bavli* was placed on the *Index* by Pope Paul IV.

This means that it is quite possible that some references to an individual (or individuals) who (albeit even unconsciously), may have served as a catalyst in the development of either the foundation and/or appellation of the subsequent Christian concept of Jesus have long been removed and are now quite lost to history.

Furthermore, where references to Jesus are believed to exist, they are rarely flattering to the ears of a Christian believer. As a consequence, Christian authorities (especially in the early part of the Common Era), convinced that certain Talmudic passages referred directly to their particular notion of Jesus, have often made the claim that they were generated *deliberately* as part of the negative Jewish response to the rapid spread of Christianity. In

this context, it is often argued, that these particular accounts were altered by a politically biased insertion or redaction, solicited solely by the Jews' perceived threat of encroaching Christianity between c. 200 C.E. and c. 500 C.E.

The Written Evidence (*Talmud Bavli* and the *Tosefta*)

This section is heavily indebted to the insights of Student (2000) who should be regarded as one of the pioneers when it comes to critically examining the *Talmud* and associated sources for information about an historical Jesus.[113] It is also beholden to the immense biographical work undertaken by Hyman (1964).[114]

Although concerned and even infuriated Christians have managed to find any number of (at best) indirect and even symbolic or metaphoric references to, inter alia, Jesus and Mary his mother in the *Talmud*, these cannot be taken seriously. Indeed, more rational scholars would surely tend to dismiss such nonsensical claims as nothing more than the wild imaginings of tedious provocateurs.

Centuries ago, the Tosafist, Yechiel (or Yehiel) ben Joseph of Paris a.k.a. Sir Vives (d. c. 1286)[115] and other Jewish apologists, such as Moses ha-Kohen de Tordesillas (fl. 1370s) tried in vain to convince medieval Christians that there were two historical personages called "Jesus", viz.: one of the *NT* and another of the *Talmud*. It should also be noted that, at least as far back as the fourteenth century, in the light of the constant Christian attempts to ban and/or discredit the *Talmud*, the Jewish sage Asher ben Jehiel a.k.a. *Asher ben Yechiel* a.k.a. Asheri (1250/9–1327)[116] declared that no mention of Jesus was to be found in the *Talmud*.

With reference to Maccoby (1982: 35–55) and Seidman (2006: 137), it is no surprise that such famous medieval Jewish converts to Christianity, as Pablo Christiani (Barcelona) and Nicholas Donin (Paris) publicly claimed that the *Talmud* made blasphemous references to Jesus.

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[113] Cf. Student, 2000.
[114] Cf. Hyman 1964. *Toldoth Tannaim Ve'Amoraim*, Vol. I–III.
[115] Jehiel Ben Joseph of Paris cf. JewishEncyclopedia.com. [Online]. Available: http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/8553-jehiel-ben-joseph-of-paris [15 July 2014].
[116] Asher Ben Jehiel cf. JewishEncyclopedia.com. [Online]. Available: http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/1930-asher-ben-jehiel [15 July 2014].

Today most informed scholars (cf. Student, 2000), agree it is somewhat challenging to see any direct connection between these cited passages and the Jesus described in the synoptic gospels. Certainly, many historians and Talmudists alike, have already ascertained that it is unlikely in the final analysis for any of these passages to refer to the personage Christians call Jesus.

Despite this well publicised knowledge, mostly conservative scholars are still intent on pedalling the well-worn notion that the uncensored *Talmud* and *Tosefta* contain direct references to Jesus, his family members and disciples. Certainly, it is quite possible that both Jews and Christians in the early middle ages assumed then, that certain passages which contained suggestive keywords were really historical references to Jesus *et al*. And undeniably, because of these passages' content (often perceived as defamatory), when taken together with their assumed association to Jesus, his parents or disciples, they became obvious candidates for expurgation by self-censoring Jews as well as the occasional medieval pope. It is also very likely that at least some of these texts were elaborated upon by later Jewish writers who were engaged with distinctly anti-Christian polemics. However, this does not make the passages–even the deliberately orchestrated ones–reliable, extra-biblical references to an historical Jesus.

Regardless of these well-known issues, one can still find "scholarly" articles being published (e.g. Instone-Brewer, 2011: 269–294) which go to great lengths to show that the *Talmud* and *Tosefta* have real value as primary historical evidence (not to mention derogatory comments), about Jesus, Mary and disciples etc. These articles will even attempt to show which parts of a potentially evocative passage (originally composed anytime between c. 100 B.C.E. and c. 100 C.E.), is "original" and which parts were adulterated by later Jewish scribes. They will then claim to have ultimately revealed the "authentic" statements relevant to an historical Jesus, his teaching and his execution.

As already intimated, a good example of this approach is reflected in the work of Instone-Brewer (2011: 272). In discussing both Jewish and Christian censorship of the *Talmud* and *Tosefta* in, inter alia, the fifteenth century and later, this writer constantly assumes that an historical Jesus is always being referred to by some means. This might be metaphoric or symbolic–even when the common name "*Yeshua*" is absent from the text. Thus armed, he believes that Jesus is being referred to even when not mentioned by name! Indeed, he confirms that the name of Jesus does not always occur in censored passages and merely assumes that pseudonyms

like "*Ben Stada*" and "*Ben Pandira*" refer to Jesus.

As will be soon realised, these musings are nothing more than wishful thinking. From a purely factual stance and as confirmed by Student (2000), both the *Talmud Bavli* and the *Tosefta* (taken together), contain exactly six passages that have at various times been identified as making *direct* references to either an historical Jesus and/or his mother and/or his disciples. Therefore, these alleged references need to be subjected to a critical review and objective appraisal to see if any new light can be shed on these claims.

For example, Student (2000) warns his reader that the *Talmud* often contains references to many individuals who all have the same name. This can cause confusion for the unwary. He cites Hyman (1964)[117] who ascertained in his extensive studies, some 61 references to the name *Eleazar;* 14 references to the name *Hillel* and 71 references to persons with the appellation *Huna*. Student also cites Meier (1991: 206), who correctly points out that of the twenty or so references to persons called variously "Joshua" or "Jesus" in the works of Josephus, at least ten were living at the same time that Christians claim Jesus was engaged in his ministry. As will be elaborated upon in more detail later, based on Leidner's (2000: 19–20) observations, all four works of Josephus make reference to a grand total of 21 individuals, each of whom is named "Jesus".

Lastly, some authorities (cf. Mead, 1903)[118] have also suggested that the Talmudic passages in question may refer to an individual or individuals whose life experiences served in some small way as a catalyst for later more theologically motivated interpretations concerning Jesus. In this latter regard, they are seen by some as references to what may be termed a "proto-Jesus".

Forearmed with these important considerations, the following passages from the Babylonian *Talmud* are pertinent to the present investigation:

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[117] Hyman, 1964. *Toldoth Tannaim Ve'Amoraim,* Vol. I–III.

[118] Mead, (1903) first theorised the existence of an individual in history who possibly inspired the later gospel narratives. Cf. Mead. 1903. *Did Jesus Live 100 B.C.?:* Available [Online]: http://gnosis.org/library/grs-mead/jesus_live_100/ [14 August 2014].

Passage 1 (*Talmud Shabbat* 104b, *Sanhedrin* 67a)

A translation of the uncensored text as supplied by the DTorah digital *Talmud*[119] yields:

> R`Eliezer said to the Sages: But did not *Ben Stada* bring forth witchcraft from Egypt by means of scratches [in the form of charms] upon his flesh?
>
> He was a fool, answered they. And proof cannot be adduced from fools.
>
> Was he then the son of *Stada*: surely he was the son of *Pandira*?
>
> Said R. Hisda: The husband was *Stada*, the paramour was *Pandira*. But the husband was *Pappos b. Judah*?
>
> His mother was *Stada*. But his mother was *Miriam* the hairdresser?[120]–It is as we say in Pumbeditha: This one has been unfaithful to (lit., 'turned away from'–*satath da*) her husband [my amended transliteration].

Overview and analysis

If taken literally, this passage admits to being based upon hearsay supplied collectively by possibly as many as four rabbis. We do not know the exact time period covered by these commentaries. The primary account seems to have formed part of a teaching originally generated by one Rabbi Eliezar. It would seem that the most important issue, viz.: the unnamed son of a man called *Stada* practiced illicit Egyptian-based magic and was a fool, not to be trusted.

There is obvious confusion in this passage because none of the commentators agrees with the exact details pertaining to *Ben Stada*.

Rabbi Eliezar seems to be saying that *Stada* (i.e. the father of the foolish man), was also known as *Pandira*. According to Student (2000), Talmudic scholars have pointed out that the name *Panthera* (which in both Aramaic and Hebrew is comparable to *Pandira*) was a common name.

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[119] English translation according to Babylonian Talmud: Tractate *Shabbath* 104b in *DTorah.com*. [Online]. Available: http://dtorah.com/otzar/shas_soncino.php?ms=Shabbath&df=104b [4 August 2014].
[120] NB. Sometimes the Hebrew is translated to imply that *Miriam* had long hair.

Rabbi Chisda or Hisda seems to indicate that this foolish man may have had a father by the name of *Stada* whereas his biological father was someone called *Pandira*. The implications are that the mother had an extramarital affair with *Pandira* which resulted in the birth of an illegitimate son (i.e. the fool).

Another voice refutes this, pointing out that it was the foolish man's mother who was called *Stada* and furthermore, she was married to someone called *Pappos ben Yehudah*.

Finally, yet another voice claims that the mother's name was in fact *Miriam* but that she was known as "*Stada*" because she had turned away (*satath da*), from her husband.

If one ignores the confusion of names, all we know for certain is that there once was a foolish man who was the illegitimate son of a married woman. At least one of his biological parents (i.e. either his mother or his father), was known as "*Stada*".

Possible links to Jesus

It is possible to conflate two unrelated pieces of information, viz.:

1. The synoptic gospels record Jesus' mother as *Maria.* In Syro-Aramaic this would be *Maryam*–a variant of the Hebrew name *Miryam* or *Miriam*); and
2. The *Talmud* states that the fool's mother might have been called *Miriam*.

The unwary might want to jump to the unjustifiable conclusion that the "fool" and Jesus are identical. Student (2000) makes the additional observation (with reference to R. Meir Halevi Abulafia, *Yad Rama*, *Sanhedrin*) that this particular "*Miriam*" is called a "women's hairdresser" which is the translation of *megadla nashaia*. It is possible that this could be phonetically confused with the *NT* persona of Mary Magdalene.

Student (2000) informs his reader that the name *Pappos ben Yehudah* also appears in the *Mechilta Beshalach* (*Vayehi* ch. 6) where he is shown to be discussing the *Torah* with the well-known Rabbi Akiva.[121] This notion is supported by another mention of him in *Talmud Berachot* 61b when he and Rabbi Akiva are captured and both executed by the Romans. It is accepted that Rabbi Akiva (who was martyred in c. 137 C.E.), obviously lived during

[121] *Akiva ben Yohsef* (c. 40–c. 137 C.E.).

the second half of the first century C.E. and the first decades of the second century C.E. Therefore, if this is really the same *Pappos ben Yehudah* who is mentioned specifically in *Talmud Shabbat* 104b, *Sanhedrin* 67a, he could not possibly be the biological father of Jesus (i.e. a man who is assumed by Christians to have died in c. 33 C.E.).

Conclusion

It is unlikely that either Mary Magdalene or Jesus' mother were hair-dressers. In addition, according to Christian tradition, the Magdalene was not Jesus' mother. *Ben Stada* was alive at least a century after the time of Jesus and logically could not be synonymous with the Jesus of the synoptic gospels.

Passage 2 (*Talmud Sanhedrin* 107b, *Sotah* 47a)

A translation of the uncensored text as originally supplied by the *Come-and-Hear* digital *Talmud* website[122] yields the following:

> What of R. Joshua b. Perahjah?
>
> When King Jannai [i.e. John Hyrcanus] slew our Rabbis, R. Joshua b. Perahjah (and Jesus) fled to Alexandria of Egypt.
>
> On the resumption of peace, Simeon b. Shetach sent to him: "From me, (Jerusalem) the holy city, to thee, Alexandria of Egypt (my sister). My husband dwelleth within thee and I am desolate."
>
> He arose, went, and found himself in a certain inn, where great honour was shewn him. "How beautiful is this Acsania!" (The word denotes both inn and innkeeper. R. Joshua used it in the first sense; the answer assumes the second to be meant.)
>
> Thereupon (Jesus) observed, "Rabbi, her eyes are narrow."
>
> "Wretch," he rebuked him, "dost thou thus engage thyself." He sounded four hundred trumpets and excommunicated him.
>
> He (Jesus) came before him many times pleading, "Receive me!" But he would pay no heed to him.

[122] Babylonian Talmud: Tractate *Sanhedrin*, Folio 67a in *Come-And-Hear.com*. [Online]. Available: http://www.come-and-hear.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_67.html [18 July 2014].

> One day he (R. Joshua) was reciting the Shema, when Jesus came before him. He intended to receive him and made a sign to him. He (Jesus) thinking that it was to repel him, went, put up a brick, and worshipped it.
>
> "Repent," said he (R. Joshua) to him. He replied, "I have thus learned from thee: He who sins and causes others to sin is not afforded the means of repentance."
>
> And a Master has said, "Jesus [ha'Notzri] practised magic and led Israel astray." [My insertions].

Overview and analysis

Student (2000) points out that both historians and Talmudists disagree on exactly when this account took place but personally favours a later date.

Student (2000), with repeated reference to Hyman (1964), informs his reader that the "John" referred to in this passage is normally believed to be the pro-Sadducee king John Hyrcanus who is well known for his attempts to exterminate all Pharisaic rabbis sometime in or after 93 B.C.E.[123] At this time, a Jerusalem-based Pharisee, *Rabbi Yehoshua ben Perachiah* and his student *Yeshu ha'Notzri* fled to Alexandria to protect themselves.[124] Another Pharisee, one *Shimon ben Shetach,* remained behind in Jerusalem but was secretly given refuge by his sister, *Salome Alexandra*, who was coincidentally John Hyrcanus' daughter-in-law.[125] However, the political situation suddenly altered in 91 B.C.E. with the death of John Hyrcanus and two of his sons, viz. *Antigonus* and *Aristobulos*. Another son of Hyrcanus (i.e. *Alexander Janneus*), then became king. This new king, despite still being pro-Sadducee, was coerced by his wife into appointing the Pharisee *Shimon ben Shetach to* the *Sanhedrin*, which at this time was largely controlled by the Sadducee faction.

By virtue of his political acumen *Shimon ben Shetach eventually* managed to appoint a number of his own Pharisaic students to the *Sanhedrin.*[126] Eventually (c. 80 B.C.E.), it became safe enough for the exiled Pharisaic rabbis to risk returning to Jerusalem. In this regard, *Shimon ben Shetach* sent a coded message to his former mentor (i.e. *Rabbi Yehoshua ben*

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[123] Cf. Hyman, 1964. Vol. II: 691–692 and 766.
[124] Cf. Hyman, Vol. II: 647 and 692.
[125] Cf. Hyman, Vol. II: 647, 692 and 766; Vol. III: 1212–1213.
[126] Cf. Hyman, 1964. Vol. II: 766–767; Vol. III: 1213–1214.

Perachiah), exhorting him to return[127]

On the journey home, *Yeshu* misinterpreted his master's innocent comment about the inn and unfortunately demonstrated (by virtue of his inappropriate response), that he had (from a Pharisaic perspective), somewhat lax sexual morals. His master's rather hasty reaction was to have his student injudiciously excommunicated.

Yeshu then attempted to redeem himself in his former master's eyes and subsequently *Rabbi Yehoshua ben Perachiah* resolved to forgive his former student whilst he was reciting the *Shema.* Because he was not allowed to speak at the time, *Rabbi Yehoshua ben Perachiah,* whilst still praying, motioned with his hand for *Yeshu* to come to him. *Yeshu*, believing that his former master was angry with him for interrupting his prayers, misinterpreted the hand signal as a clear indication that he must depart from *ben Perachiah*'s presence. Disillusioned, *Yeshu* left *ben Perachiah* and created his own Jewish sect and ultimately led others away from the mainstream faith.

It should also be pointed out that the Talmudic scholar, Maier (1978: 268–275) considers, inter alia, *Sanhedrin* 107b, to be a later revision of an earlier version.

Possible links to Jesus

Some Christian historians in the past (no doubt desperate to find some extra-biblical/scriptural reference to an historical Jesus), assumed naively that *Yeshu* and Jesus, were the same individual. Seemingly disregarding the fact that *Yeshu* is a very common Jewish name, they felt emboldened in their presumption by the cursory similarities between the actions of the Jesus of the synoptic gospels and the recorded conduct of the Talmudic *Yeshu* who broke away from the old faith and created a new religion.

This view was strengthened by the fact that this particular *Yeshu* is also referred to as *Yeshu ha'Notzri*. By virtue of a possible misunderstanding of the significance of the Hebrew term "*Notzri*" (which refers to "watchmen" or "guardians" [Jeremiah 4: 16]), Medieval Christians subsequently equated *Yeshu ha'Notzri* with "Jesus the Nazarene".[128] Although it is certain that

[127] Ibid.

[128] It should be noted that it is still common for certain writers to naively assume that any reference in the *Talmud* to *Yeshu ha'Notzri* automatically refers to Jesus the Nazarene. One of the first to do this in more recent times was Herford (1903: 37-8).

later Jewish writers used the terms *Notzrim* and *Netzarim* to refer to Christians this was certainly not possible during the inter-testamental period.

Conclusion

Regardless of the possible machinations of either Christian or Jewish interpolation in the medieval period and later, the facts are that the *Yeshu* referred to in this passage had been dead for at least a century before the period it is normally assumed that Jesus was involved in his ministry. Therefore, if this *Yeshu* was known as *ha'Notzri* at this early stage (i.e. before the establishment of even a nascent form of Christianity) it stands to reason that in this context at least "*ha'Notzri*" is unlikely to mean "Nazarene" and is certainly not a Jewish term for a Christian.

Passage 3 (*Talmud Sanhedrin* 67a)

According to Student (2000), this passage from the uncensored *Talmud Bavli* may be translated as follows:

> It is taught: For all others liable for the death penalty [except for the enticer to idolatry] we do not hide witnesses. How do they deal with [the enticer]? They light a lamp for him in the inner chamber and place witnesses in the outer chamber so that they can see and hear him while he cannot see or hear them. One says to him "Tell me again what you said to me in private" and he tells him. He says "How can we forsake our G-d in heaven and worship idolatry?" If he repents, good. If he says "This is our obligation and what we must do" the witnesses who hear him from outside bring him to the court and stone him. And so they did to *Ben Stada* in *Lud* and hung him on *Erev Pesach* [Eve of Passover].

The *Come-and-Hear* digital *Talmud* website[129] translates the last sentence as: "And this they did to *Ben Stada* in Lydda, and they hung him on the eve of Passover."

Overview and analysis

This passage also refers to the same *Ben Stada* mentioned in Passage 1, which informed us that he also practiced witchcraft. Now it is disclosed that this individual was also suspected of being an idolater as well as inciting

[129] Babylonian Talmud: Tractate *Sanhedrin*, Folio 67a in *Come-And-Hear.com.* [Online]. Available: http://www.come-and-hear.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_67.html [18 July 2014].

others to do the same. This passage supplies the reader with a technique that was employed by the judges to ensure that at least two witnesses could confirm a suspect's guilt. In this particular case, it would appear that it was successfully employed to convict and stone *Ben Stada* on *Erev Pesach* (Eve of Passover) in a town called *Lud*.[130]

Possible links to Jesus

It had already been assumed by the more credulous, that the *Ben Stada* mentioned in *Talmud Shabbat* 104b, *Sanhedrin* 67a (Passage 1), was indistinguishable from Jesus because his mother was also known as *Miriam*. *Talmud Sanhedrin* 67a (Passage 3), seemed to provide yet further proof of this claim because this "*Ben Stada*", like Jesus, was executed on the eve of Passover (cf. John, 19: 14). However, as it is already known that this *Ben Stada* was a contemporary of *Pappos ben Yehudah* who is mentioned specifically in Passage 1; he must have lived about a century *after* the purported time of Jesus.

In addition, this *Ben Stada* was stoned by Jewish law on the eve of Passover in *Lud* whereas according to the synoptic gospels (i.e. Matt 26: 18–20; Mark 14: 16–18; and Luke 22: 13–15), Jesus was crucified by the Romans in Jerusalem on Passover itself.

Conclusion

This *Ben Stada* could not be synonymous with the Jesus of the synoptic gospels.

Passage 4 (*Talmud Sanhedrin* 43a)

According to Student (2000), this passage from the uncensored *Talmud Bavli* may be translated as follows:

> It is taught: On *Erev Pesach* [Eve of Passover] they hung *Yeshu* and the crier went forth for forty days beforehand declaring that "[*Yeshu*] is going to be stoned for practicing witchcraft, for enticing and leading Israel astray. Anyone who knows something to clear him should come forth and exonerate him." But no one had anything exonerating for him and they hung him on *Erev Pesach* [Eve of Passover].

[130] Presumably modern-day Lod or Lydda, situated some 15 kilometres southeast of Tel Aviv (i.e. situated on the Plain of Sharon).

> Ulla said: Would one think that we should look for exonerating evidence for him? He was an enticer and G-d said (Deut. 13: 9) "Show him no pity or compassion, and do not shield him."
>
> *Yeshu* was different because he was close to the government.

Overview and Analysis

This passage refers to the same *Yeshu* previously mentioned in Passage 2 except here an account is given concerning the circumstances of his execution. Like the *Ben Stada* previously mentioned in Passage 1, he is apparently also executed on the eve of Passover. It has already been pointed out in the overview for Passage 2 that this particular *Yeshu* (awaiting his execution), was a contemporary of king *Alexander Janneus*. At the time the Jewish law court was predominantly Pharisaic. *Yeshu* seems to have been on good terms with *Alexander Janneus* who is known to have been pro-Sadducee. This might explain why an attempt was made by the Pharisees to find some mitigating evidence that might exonerate him and thus obviate upsetting king *Alexander Janneus*. As is the case for *Sanhedrin* 107b, Maier (1978: 268–275) also considers *Sanhedrin* 43a to be a later redaction of an earlier version.

Possible links to Jesus

This *Yeshu*, like the Jesus described in John 19: 14 was executed on the eve of Passover. However, as was the case for the *Ben Stada* mentioned in Passage 3, the synoptic gospels[131] contradict this notion by reporting that Jesus was crucified by the Romans on Passover itself. In addition, they give the clear message that the Jews were unable to carry out a death sentence whilst under Roman occupation.

In this connection, John 18: 31[132] states:

> Pilate said, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law". "But we have no right to execute anyone," the Jews objected.

[131] Cf. Matt 26: 18–20; Mark 14: 16–18; and Luke 22: 13–15.
[132] English (NIV) text according to William D. Mounce and Robert H. Mounce, *The Zondervan Greek and English Interlinear New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 436.

However, in his *Ant.* 20, 9, 1 / 200, Josephus tells his reader that during the interregnum of Festus[133] and Albinius[134] (c. 59–62 C.E.) Ananus condemned individuals to be stoned. This seems to indicate that the Jews still retained the right to execute their own people for criminal activity and clearly contradicts the gospel storyline.

Lastly, nowhere in the *NT* is there any mention of Jesus having connections to the government of the day. As this is the same *Yeshu* mentioned in Passage 2, the same reasons apply for discounting this as a valid reference to an historical Jesus.

Conclusion

As has already been determined, the *Yeshu* referred to in this passage had been dead for at least a century before the assumed time of Jesus.

Passage 5 (*Talmud Sanhedrin* 43a)

According to Student (2000), this passage from the uncensored *Talmud Bavli* may be translated as follows:

> It is taught: *Yeshu* had five disciples–*Matai, Nekai, Netzer, Buni*, and *Todah*.
>
> They brought *Matai* [before the judges].
>
> He said to them: Will *Matai* be killed? It is written (Psalm 42: 2) "When [*Matai*] shall (I) come and appear before G-d."
>
> They said to him: Yes, *Matai* will be killed as it is written (Psalm 41: 5) "When [*Matai*] shall (he) die and his name perish."
>
> They brought *Nekai*. He said to them: Will *Nekai* be killed? It is written (Exodus 23: 7) "The innocent [*Naki*] and the righteous you shall not slay."
>
> They said to him: Yes, *Nekai* will be killed as it is written (Psalm 10: 8) "In secret places he slays the innocent [*Naki*]."
>
> They brought *Netzer*.
>
> He said to them: Will *Netzer* be killed? It is written (Isa 11: 1) "A branch [*Netzer*] shall spring up from his roots."

[133] *Porcius Festus,* Procurator of Judea (c. 57/58–c. 62 C.E.).
[134] *Lucceius Albinus* (fl. 60–70 C.E.). Procurator of Judea (c. 62–c. 64 C.E.).

> They said to him: Yes, *Netzer* will be killed as it is written (Isa 14: 19) "You are cast forth out of your grave like an abominable branch [*Netzer*]."
>
> They brought *Buni*. He said to them: Will *Buni* be killed? It is written (Exodus 4: 22) "My son [*Beni*], my firstborn, Israel."
>
> They said to him: Yes, *Buni* will be killed as it is written (Exodus 4: 23) "Behold, I slay your son [*Bincha*] your firstborn."
>
> They brought *Todah*. He said to them: Will *Todah* be killed? It is written (Psalm 100: 1) "A Psalm for thanksgiving [*Todah*]."
>
> They said to him: Yes, *Todah* will be killed as it is written (Psalm 50: 23) "Whoever sacrifices thanksgiving [*Todah*] honours me."

Overview and Analysis

This passage deals with the trial of *Yeshu*'s five disciples who have been accused of idolatry.

Each disciple, in his turn, eruditely employs a droll interpretation of an appropriate text taken from the *Tanach* in order to exonerate himself. However, the court (equally knowledgeable and quite determined to see each of these men receive the death penalty), rapidly responds with equal sharpness of wit. As is the case for *Sanhedrin* 107b, Maier (1978: 268–275) also considers *Sanhedrin* 43a to be a later redaction of an earlier version. In fact he confirms the notion that there are no authentic Tannaitic passages which can be linked to an historical Jesus. In addition, all of the Amoraic passages are not original–they are nothing more than post-Talmudic reworkings (interpolations).

Possible links to Jesus

Wishful thinkers believe that *Yeshu* might refer to Jesus and this claim is then strengthened by the prospect that *Matai* (possibly the Aramaic form of *Matityahu*) may also refer to Matthew, a disciple of Jesus in the gospel accounts. However, this tenuous link is immediately severed when the remaining four disciples are described. If by some stretch of the imagination (as suggested by Student, 2000), the name *Todah* could be equated to *Thaddeus* (another disciple of Jesus), *Nekai*, *Netzer* and *Buni* certainly cannot. The passage clearly indicates that this *Yeshu* only had five adherents whereas the gospels clearly tell us that Jesus had twelve disciples. The gospels do not mention any of Jesus' disciples being executed by Jewish authorities and even if they were, it was not possible during the time in

question for this to have occurred. Finally, *Yeshu*, *Matityahu* and *Matai* are not uncommon Jewish names.

Conclusion

There simply is not enough evidence to positively link the individuals mentioned in this passage to the Jesus mentioned in the gospels.

Passage 6 (*Tosefta Chullin* 2: 23)[135]

According to Student (2000), this passage from the *Tosefta Chullin* may be translated as follows:

> It once happened that *Rabbi Eliazar ben Damah* was bitten by a snake and *Ya'akov* of the village *Sechania* came to heal him in the name of *Yeshu ben Pandira*, but *Rabbi Yishmael* did not allow him.

Possible links to Jesus

In this passage, there are no real links to Jesus per se. However, what is interesting is that this is the only Talmudic passage (albeit from the *Tosefta*) that makes a connection between the name "*Yeshu*" and "*Ben Pandira*" (previously mentioned in Passage 1).

Rabbinic Interpretation

It is noteworthy that the accepted rabbinic interpretation of the import of these six passages is in perfect accord with the present review:

Firstly, far from these references being to one individual (let alone the Jesus of the gospel accounts) it is far more plausible that they refer to two distinct personalities, viz.: *Yeshu ben Pandira* and *Ben Stada* respectively. The only connections between the two are their fathers' names, that they were executed on the day before Passover, and that they both spent time in Egypt. The first is probably a mere coincidence because, as has already been determined, *Panthera* (which in Hebrew and Aramaic is equivalent of *Pandira*) was a common name.

[135]The text of the *Tosefta Chulin* was taken from the standard Vilna edition and slightly modified based on Saul Liebermann's *Tosefeth Rishonim* (1937-39).

Yeshu ben Pandira c. 80 B.C.E.		*Ben Stada* c. 100 C.E.	
Passage 2	Student of *Rabbi Yehoshua ben Perachiah*	**Passage 1**	Known as *Ben Pandira* and also *Ben Stada*, possibly to distinguish him from *Yeshu ben Pandira*
	Fled to Egypt to escape from *John Hyrcanus*. Became an idolater.		He brought witchcraft from Egypt
Passage 4	Executed on the eve of Passover in Jerusalem.		His mother was *Miriam* the hairdresser, also known as *Stada*
	Had ties with the government (i.e. the king?)		His father was *Pandira*
Passage 5	Had five disciples who were executed.		His step-father was *Pappos ben Yehudah*
Passage 6	His legacy remained for centuries, even until the time of Rabbi Yishmael (d. 133 C.E.)	**Passage 3**	He was executed on the eve of Passover in *Lud* for idolatry by stoning.

Table 4

Biographical Details of *Yeshu ben Pandira* and *Ben Stada.*

Table 4 is based on a similar format as proffered by Student (2000).[136]This clearly shows which biographical details refer to each person in question.

Discussion

It should be seen as highly indicative of the power of the dominant worldview of most Christian scholars that they will insist that either some or all of the passages reviewed in this section, to be undisputed, authentic references to Jesus and/or one of his associates or family members.

This is despite the fact that, apart from the obvious misalignment of dates, none of the accounts mirrors in any way the specifics of the various *NT* accounts concerning Jesus and/or his associates. Certainly, at best the

[136] Cf. Student, 2000.

various passages from the *Talmud* and *Tosefta* reviewed in this section have been forced to yield meaning that was never present to begin with.

2.12 Chapter Two Summary

Despite conservative Christians' claim to the contrary, clearly, no tangible, substantiated extra-biblical/scriptural evidence exists to place an historical Jesus in Galilee/Judea in the first third of the first century C.E. In addition, no mention is made of any individual that could be associated with either James the Just or John the Baptist.

Mara Bar Serapion's letter *does not* mention anyone called Jesus. Based on an assumption that someone referred to as a "wise king" and/or "virtuous" and "ethical" can only be Jesus, Habermas (1996a: 207-8) literally puts words into *Mara Bar Serapion's* mouth. Again, he has Pliny serve as substantiation that specifically "Jesus" was worshipped as a deity (cf. Habermas, 1969a: 199). In Pliny's writings, the name "Jesus" is never mentioned. Indeed, he only refers to Christians worshipping a "quasi-deity" called *Christus*.

Possibly, the nearest that one obtains to any vestige of authenticity is in the *Annales*, XV, 44 (albeit with the very suspicious reference to Pontius Pilate). In addition, far more evidence exists that shows deliberate falsification of information for the explicit purpose of painting a picture of brutal Roman persecution of the nascent Christian sect than an attempt at trying to supply extra-biblical proof of an historical Jesus.

It is therefore, safe to state, that none of the passages investigated, even if authentic, offers any extra-biblical/scriptural information regarding Jesus, James the Just or John the Baptist.

We can safely assume, at this juncture, that only Josephus might offer the objective historian with any other possible substantiation.

CHAPTER THREE

THE *TESTIMONIUM FLAVIANUM*

3.1 Introduction

This chapter deals primarily with the so-called *TF* (*Testimonium Flavianum*) (i.e. *Ant.* 18, 3, 3 / 63–64). By way of introduction, and for the purposes of referencing, it is presented below in transliterated Greek so that readers may follow the arguments that follow and which concern the specific employment of Greek terminology. This decision is based on the fact that many readers will not understand Koine Greek text. The transliteration is followed by an English translation (i.e. according to William Whiston). As explained in Chapter One (Introduction), for a general translation, the Whiston version is favoured, primarily because it seems to be the most popular rendering employed by those scholars involved in the contemporary debates pertaining to its status and avowed import. For a more modern translation by Feldman (1965) please refer to the footnote.[137]

Passage from *Ant.* 18, 3, 3 / 63–64.

Ginetai de kata touton ton chronon Iêsous sophos anêr, eige andra auton legein chrê: ên gar paradoxôn ergôn poiêtês, didaskalos anthrôpôn tôn hêdonêi talêthê dechomenôn, kai pollous men Ioudaious, pollous de kai tou Hellênikou epêgageto: ho Christos houtos ên. Kai auton endeixei tôn prôtôn andrôn par' hêmin staurôi epitetimêkotos Pilatou ouk epausanto hoi to

[137] About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he was one who wrought surprising feats and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the [Christ] Messiah. When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing amongst us, had condemned him to be crucified, those who had in the first place come to love him did not give up their affection for him. On the third day he appeared to them restored to life, for the prophets of God had prophesised these and countless other marvellous things about him. And the tribe of the Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared. [My insertion]. Based on the translation of Louis H. Feldman, 1965. *Josephus: Jewish Antiquities, Books 18–19* (Bury St. Edmunds: Loeb Classical Library, No. 433).

> *prôton agapêsantes: ephanê gar autois tritên echôn hêmeran palin zôn tôn theiôn prophêtôn tauta te kai alla muria peri autou thaumasia eirêkotôn. Eis eti te nun tôn Christianôn apo toude ônomasmenon ouk epelipe to phûlon.*

Translated, the *TF*[138] reads as follows:

> Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.

3.2 Brief Historical Background

It is important to take cognisance of the fact that the first recorded person to ever cite the *TF* was *Eusebius Pamphili* a.k.a. Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 263–c. 339 C.E.) who will be referred to in this book as Eusebius. In this regard, the *TF* passage appears variously in his *Dem. ev.* III, 5. (c. 311 C.E.), his *Hist. eccl.* I, 11. (c. 313 C.E.) and his *Theoph.* 5, 44, (which although originally composed in Greek has largely come down to us via a Syriac translation).[139]

In addition, it should be noted, that in his *Dem. ev.* Eusebius quotes the *TF* in essentially the same form as that presented above, except that he cites

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[138] English Translation according to Whiston. 1999. *Josephus*: *The New Complete Works of Josephus:* 662, (*Jewish Antiquities*, 18, 3, 3 / 63–64). Cf. Greek text and English translation according to Whiston (Tr.) 1895. *Flavius Josephus. The Works of Flavius Josephus,* in *Perseus Digital Library* [Online]. Available: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0145%3Abook%3D18%3Awhiston+chapter%3D3%3Awhiston+section%3D3 [30 May 2012].

[139] It is not known when the *Theophania* was written. Only fragments are preserved in the original Greek However, a complete Syriac translation survives in an early fifth century manuscript. In many respects it is similar to *The Proof of the Gospel*. The well-known editor and translator of the Syriac version, Lee (1843: xxi–xxii), believed that the original Greek version post-dated Constantine's restoration of peace (i.e. c. 306 C.E. onwards), to the early church and thus predates *The Proof of the Gospel*. Cf. Lee. 1843. Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea, *On the Theophania, or Divine Manifestation of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

"*pollous tôn Ioudaion*" instead of "*pollous men Ioudaious*" and places the word "*apo*" before "*tou Hellênikou*". Lastly, "*prôtôn andrôn*" appears as "*archonton*".

In addition, the *TF* has also been preserved as a separate piece of text when cited by various Christian writers in many other manuscripts.

3.3 Arguments For and Against Authenticity

The purpose of this chapter is to stress a number of diverse issues simultaneously, viz.:

1. The tenor of the current debate with reference to the *TF* (*Testimonium Flavianum*);

2. An illustrative exposé as regards those more essential arguments proffered by the more critical and liberal scholars who tend to predominantly see the *TF* as an unmitigated interpolation by a Christian apologist who lived well after the time of Josephus;

3. A descriptive disclosure as regards those (normally) counter-arguments propounded by the typically more conservative scholars, who at the very least want to have the core features of the *TF* considered as authentic, independent, extra-biblical/scriptural proof for the historical existence of Jesus; and

4. A more plausible historical context for Josephus' writings.

This is undertaken in order to highlight what can only be described as a very obvious pattern of scholarship, which seems to be almost totally dependent on the shared world-view of a particular grouping of scholars rather than on the logical ratiocination of the known facts.

An attempt has also been made, wherever possible, to systematise the various issues under dispute. These are heavily dependent on the previous insights of many scholars, and in particular individuals such as Doherty (2009), Mason (2003), Zindler (2003) and Wells (1989) etc. Also, due largely to the fact that many of the topics covered are (more often than not), closely interrelated with each other, there will, on occasion, be a certain amount of necessary and unavoidable repetition or overlapping of themes.

Moreover, it must be understood that this debate and most of the issues under review have been, in some cases, extant for several centuries.[140] Undeniably, it has had the input of numerous, often highly reputable scholars. This investigation attempts to understand better why after many decades of debate, finality still cannot be achieved as regards what one would have thought would be an open and shut case. In short, given the known facts, all rational thinkers should surely accept the result of a coherent argument.

Finally, for the purpose of this exercise, the various inputs will be limited to a select group of mostly contemporary thinkers who are still active and/or relevant in the current interpolation debate. This selection of individuals represents hopefully the best that each worldview or constructed reality/belief system has to offer.

Establishing a trustworthy historical context for the *Testimonium Flavianum*

We need not dwell too long here on events mentioned in the *NT* which are not mentioned by Josephus, because we have no real proof of their historical veracity and thus these kinds of comparisons are not that useful.

This section will concentrate only on those issues purported to be recorded by Josephus and which also appear in, inter alia, the *NT* and pertinent texts produced by both Christian and non-Christian writers of the first few centuries of the Common Era.

The debates that follow and any claims to have arrived at a substantiated outcome are also made within a very specific context–one where it has to be assumed by the reader that, irrespective of his many purported character flaws, Josephus is being forthright and sincere when he reminds us that he is first and foremost a Jew. Undeniably, few would dare to deny that in his works, he invariably expresses his pride in his aristocratic, priestly, Jewish ancestry. Here, we are made aware of his strict Jewish upbringing and rabbinic education and training. Most importantly, his writings reflect his committed observance of Jewish principles and his abhorrence of anyone who seeks to undermine these principles.

[140] The *TF* has been disputed from at least the 16th century. Cf. Mason, 2003: 227.

In addition, possible hypocrisy aside, Josephus rarely speaks well of anyone, unless they uphold similar values to the ones he claims for himself. Certainly, what cannot be denied is that apart from the three suspected interpolations under examination in this book, Josephus is perfectly clear on his views when it comes to Jewish religious parvenus. He takes issue with the chaos they created in what were for him and the Jewish nation as a whole, very troubled and desperate times. These and similar observations are well confirmed in his *C.Ap.* (*Contra Apionem*) (c. 93 C.E.), where Josephus repudiates, inter alia, the Egyptian sophist Apion's vindictive anti-Jewish vilifications whilst championing the *Torah* and Jewish principles.

In the light of this context, when assertions are made that the *TF*, regardless of its claimed variants throughout history, was originally composed by Josephus, a very obvious inconsistency becomes manifest: Specifically, Josephus must have lived at exactly the same time (i.e. c. 50 C.E.), when the *NT* claims increasingly large numbers of Jews and Gentiles alike were being converted to a new Jesus-focused cult. This claimed groundswell was supposedly created by such apostles as Judas (Barnabas), Mark, Paul and Silas. Certainly, if one is to take the apostle Paul at his word, then this was not exactly a new phenomenon, since his epistles imply that, even as late as the early 40s C.E., this ostensibly Jesus-focused sect, whether it was still a form of Judaism or something perhaps more removed, was well established, enjoyed a popular following and already boasted what could be safely termed "denominations". This is in sharp contra-distinction to the more conventionally accepted claim that its spiritual founder had only died as recently as c. 33 C.E. and that the foundation of the very first Christian communities, which literally mushroomed overnight, somehow post-date that occurrence.

It is quite bewildering how many conservative and fundamentalist scholars innocently believe that, within a few decades, Christianity managed to spread from total insignificance, into a huge, Mediterranean-wide phenomenon. In addition, they suppose that this miracle occurred mostly by the efforts of Paul and a handful of missionaries.

Regardless, to be more realistic, this religious movement, its proto-types and many variants included, had presumably been gaining ground for quite some time. Indeed, possibly much earlier than the date of the traditional crucifixion event. After several decades the phenomenon grew (possibly slowly at first) throughout such regions as Cilicia, Greece, Syria and Macedonia (most notably in major centres including, inter alia, Amphipolis, Antioch, Corinth, Phillipi, Neapolis, Thessalonica and Thyatira). Certainly,

if we are to believe all these *NT* accounts[141], Christianity should have reached such a level that no-one could fail to take notice of its reality–certainly not after the last three decades of the first century C.E.

Yet, Josephus, the Jewish historian who supposedly had written that Jesus was the Christ and had myriads of followers by only the end of the first century C.E. makes no mention of this asserted phenomenon in any of his extant writings.

Therefore, either the *NT* accounts are exaggerated and Christianity was relatively unknown in the first century of the Common Era and/or Josephus did not mention the Christian movement for one of two reasons:

1. He disapproved of it; or

2. He had not even heard of it.

This issue becomes still more problematic when one considers the fact that in his *War*, 2, 8, 2 / 119[142] (c. 75 C.E.), Josephus bluntly states the following:

> For there are three philosophical sects among the Jews. The followers of the first of which are the Pharisees; of the second, the Sadducees; and the third sect, which pretends to a severer discipline, are called Essenes.

And, some 24 years later (c. 94–99 C.E.) in his autobiographical *Vit.* 1, 1, 2 / 10[143] Josephus again confirms this information:

> When I was about sixteen years old, I chose to gain expertise in the philosophical schools among us. There are three of these: the first, Pharisees; the second, Sadducees; and the third, Essenes, as we have often

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[141] Cf. Gal 1: 21; 2: 11; Acts 9: 31-10: 48; 11: 19-30; 11: 25; 13: 4-14: 28; 15: 40–18: 23a; 18: 23b–20: 3a; 20: 3b-12–21: 15; 27: 12–28: 31 etc.

[142] English translation according to Whiston (Tr.) s.a. Flavius Josephus: The Judean War in *Project on Ancient Cultural Engagement* [Online]. Available: http://pace-ancient.mcmaster.ca/york/york/showText?book=2&chapter=8&textChunk=whistonSection&chunkId=2&text=wars&version=whiston&direction=&tab=&layout=split&go.x=14&go.y=6 [24 June 2014].

[143] English translation according to Whiston (Tr.) s.a. Flavius Josephus: The Life of Josephus in *Project on Ancient Cultural Engagement* [Online]. Available: http://pace-ancient.mcmaster.ca/york/york/showText?book=1&chapter=1&textChunk=nieseSection&chunkId=1&up.x=10&up.y=5&text=vita&version=&direction=up&tab=&layout=split [24 June 2014].

> said. In this way I intended to choose the best [school]–if I might examine them all [my insertion].

Josephus pointedly informs his reader that by c. 53 C.E. there were *only three* Jewish religious sects in existence, excluding a sect of "Jewish Philosophy" as initiated by one Judas the Galilean as mentioned in his *Ant.* 18, 1, 6 / 23–25.[144]

> But of the fourth sect of Jewish philosophy, Judas the Galilean was the author. These men agree in all other things with the Pharisaic notions; but they have an inviolable attachment to liberty, and say that God is to be their only Ruler and Lord. They also do not value dying any kinds of death, nor indeed do they heed the deaths of their relations and friends, nor can any such fear make them call any man lord. And since this immovable resolution of theirs is well known to a great many, I shall speak no further about that matter; nor am I afraid that anything I have said of them should be disbelieved, but rather fear, that what I have said is beneath the resolution they show when they undergo pain. And it was in Gessius Florus's time that the nation began to grow mad with this distemper, who was our procurator, and who occasioned the Jews to go wild with it by the abuse of his authority, and to make them revolt from the Romans. And these are the sects of Jewish philosophy [my correction].

On this issue, Josephus confirms this fourth sect with substantial members in his *Ant.* 18, 1, 1 / 9–10[145]:

> for Judas and Sadduc, who excited a fourth philosophic sect among us, and had a great many followers therein, filled our civil government with tumults at present, and laid the foundations of our future miseries, by this system of philosophy, which we were before unacquainted withal, concerning which I will discourse a little, and this the rather because the infection which spread thence among the younger sort, who were zealous for it, brought the public to destruction.

Here there can be no doubt that this fourth religious sect is but a branch of

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[144] English translation according to Whiston (Tr.) s.a. Flavius Josephus: The Judean Antiquities in *Project on Ancient Cultural Engagement* [Online]. Available: http://pace-ancient.mcmaster.ca/york/york/showText?book= 18&chapter=1&text Chunk=whistonSection&chunkId=6&text=anti&version=whiston&direction=&tab =&layout=split&go.x=20&go.y=12 [24 July 2014].

[145] English translation according to Whiston (Tr.) s.a. Flavius Josephus: The Judean Antiquities in *Project on Ancient Cultural Engagement* [Online]. Available: http://pace-ancient.mcmaster.ca/york/york/showText?book=18&chapter=1&text Chunk=whistonSection&chunkId=1&text=anti&version=whiston&direction=&tab =&layout=split&go.x=23&go.y=3 [24 July 2014].

Judaism and cannot be confused with anything resembling a Jesus-based cult and further no mention is made of such a cult outside of the *TF*.

Therefore, if Josephus did know about Christianity but he felt compelled to lie to his readers and disclaim that it ever existed why would he then want to write so favourably about Jesus and his followers in the *TF*?

Clearly, either way one looks at the issue something is illogical. Either the *NT* is incorrect or Josephus is incorrect. If the *NT* is incorrect then Josephus is justified for not mentioning Christians in the first century C.E. and this proves that the *TF* is a forgery. However, if the *NT* is even partway accurate and Josephus is lying, then he also would not have written the *TF*. Either way it makes no sense for him to have composed this passage. So, if Josephus is to be trusted (less critical scholars certainly do accept all suspected interpolations in his *Ant.* to be largely authentic, implying their acknowledgement of his total veracity), then conversely, parts of the *NT* (which more conservative Christian scholars equally valorise), must surely be historically unreliable. No conservative scholar ever seems to take cognisance of this obvious paradox whilst in the process of attempting to retain the *TF* as an authentic independent, extra-biblical/scriptural source. Nonetheless, what seems to bother the more sceptical researchers most about the *TF* (i.e. *Ant.* 18, 3. 3 / 63–64) is the fact that if Josephus is really the author, then he has also:

1. contradicted his clear and explicit statements about extant first century C.E. religious sects of Jewish origin in his *War* and *Vit.*; and

2. perplexingly neglected to mention Jesus, his religious movement/mission, his followers/following or anything about the supposedly large and thriving Christian communities situated in, inter alia, Cilicia, Greece, Syria and Macedonia (not to mention supposed Christian activity in Rome[146]) in any of his writings other than his *Ant.*

[146] If we are to trust Tacitus' oft-quoted reference to Christians causing unrest in Rome in c. 64 C.E. (i.e. during the reign of Nero), then it is even more surprising that Josephus, who was in the service of *Titus Flavius Caesar Vespasianus Augustus* and his son *Titus Flavius Vespasianus* by 67 C.E. and who became a Roman citizen by 69 C.E. makes no mention of the sect. Cf. *Publius* (*Gaius*) *Cornelius Tacitus*: *Annales*, XV, 44. (c. 116 C.E.).

With the aforementioned passage from *Ant.* 18, 3, 3 / 63–64 in mind, if the references to, inter alia, "*Iêsous*", "*ho Christos*" and "*Christianôn*" etc. were genuinely made by Josephus' hand, why did he not concur with what must have been (according to the *NT*), well-known at the time, viz.: the existence of at least one additional, and very visible, religious cult/denomination of Jewish origin by c. 53 C.E.?

Furthermore, why does Josephus not mention (apart from the previously cited *TF*), anything about Jesus' ministry (either positive or negative), whereas he goes to great lengths to denigrate the lesser-known activities of individuals such as Judas the Galilean?[147]

The more sceptical researchers and commentators have previously picked up on these kinds of issues which undermine the claimed authenticity of the *TF* and by implication the mention of "…the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ", in the *JP* (*James the Just Passage*) (*Ant.* 20, 9, 1 / 201). Collectively, they make the following kinds of observations:

- From an historically accurate perspective, how could Josephus, as a self-proclaimed mainstream observant Jew, living at the end of the first century of the Common Era, confidently claim that Jesus was and/or claimed to be the "Christ"?

- Even if we want to allow for the highly unlikely possibility that Josephus was a "closet Christian"[148] at the time of writing (c. 94 C.E.), why did he not say something more about this specific Jesus other than the two passages in question, one of which is haphazardly placed in the middle of his biography on Pontius Pilate? (Cf. *Ant.* 18, 3, 2 / 62 and 18, 3, 4 / 65). Indeed, if Josephus was really looking for an opportunity to reveal his secret, proto-Christian faith, why choose to mention Jesus only briefly on two occasions and seemingly out of context?

- How could Josephus have possibly been aware of quite advanced Christological notions concerning Jesus' divinity which would not become more commonplace until at least the second century C.E.? After all, he had had many other opportunities to introduce the topic of Jesus (had he in fact known about him). For example, Josephus was born in Jerusalem (c. 37 C.E.) only some four years after the

[147] Cf. (*War*, 2, 8, 1 / 117–118; *Ant.* 18, 1, 1 / 4–10 and 1, 6 / 23–25).
[148] Cf. Whealey, 2003: 86–89.

alleged time of Jesus' crucifixion and death (c. 33 C.E.). He also claimed to be the governor of Galilee (c. 67 C.E.) and briefly lived in Cana (all localities having very strong associations with the canonical gospel accounts of Jesus).

Alternative messianic claimants (c. 4 BC.E.–73 C.E.)

Apart from his believed reference to Jesus (i.e. *TF*), Josephus could be interpreted to have made prophetic statements about Vespasian[149] when he seemingly panders to the emperor's allusions to acquire divine status. Supposedly based on some ambiguous oracle, Josephus makes the following statement in his *War*, 6, 5, 4 / 310–315[150]:

> Now if any one consider these things, he will find that God takes care of mankind, and by **all ways possible foreshows to our race what is for their preservation**; but that men perish by those miseries which they madly and voluntarily bring upon themselves; for the Jews, by demolishing the tower of Antonia, had made their temple four-square, while at the same time they had it written in their sacred oracles, "That then should their city be taken, as well as their holy house, when once their temple should become four-square." But now, what did the most elevate them in undertaking this war, was **an ambiguous oracle that was also found in their sacred writings, how," about that time, one from their country should become governor of the habitable earth."** The Jews took this prediction to belong to themselves in particular, and many of the wise men were thereby deceived in their determination. **Now this oracle certainly denoted the government of Vespasian, who was appointed emperor in Judea**. However, it is not possible for men to avoid fate, although they see it beforehand. But these men interpreted some of these signals according to their own pleasure, and some of them they utterly despised, until their madness was demonstrated, both by the taking of their city and their own destruction [my emphases].

However, in his *War*, 3, 8, 9 / 399–408[151], Josephus seems more certain

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[149] *Titus Flavius Caesar Vespasianus Augustus* (9–79 C.E.).

[150] English translation according to Whiston (Tr.) s.a. Flavius Josephus: The Judean War in *Project on Ancient Cultural Engagement* [Online]. Available: http://pace-ancient.mcmaster.ca/york/york/showText?book=6&chapter=5&textChunk=whistonSection&chunkId=4&text=wars&version=whiston&direction=&tab=&layout=split&go.x=22&go.y=13 [24 July 2014].

[151] English translation according to Whiston (Tr.) s.a. Flavius Josephus: The Judean War in *Project on Ancient Cultural Engagement* [Online]. Available: http://pace-ancient.mcmaster.ca/york/york/showText?book=3&chapter=8&textChunk=whistonSection&chunkId=9&text=wars&version=whiston&direction=&tab=&layout=spl

when he writes:

> When Josephus heard him give those orders, he said that he had somewhat in his mind that he would willingly say to himself alone. When therefore they were all ordered to withdraw, excepting Titus and two of their friends, he said, "Thou, O Vespasian, thinkest no more than that thou hast taken Josephus himself captive; but I come to thee as a messenger of greater tidings; for had not I been sent by God to thee, I knew what was the law of the Jews in this case? and how it becomes generals to die. Dost thou send me to? For why? Are Nero's successors till they come to thee still alive? Thou, O Vespasian, art Caesar and emperor, thou, and this thy son. Bind me now still faster, and keep me for thyself, for thou, O Caesar, are not only lord over me, but over the land and the sea, and all mankind; and certainly I deserve to be kept in closer custody than I now am in, in order to be punished, if I rashly affirm anything of God." When he had said this, Vespasian at present did not believe him, but supposed that Josephus said this as a cunning trick, in order to his own preservation; but in a little time he was convinced, and believed what he said to be true, God himself erecting his expectations, so as to think of obtaining the empire, and by other signs fore-showing his advancement. He also found Josephus to have spoken truth on other occasions; for one of those friends that were present at that secret conference said to Josephus, "I cannot but wonder how thou couldst not foretell to the people of Jotapata that they should be taken, nor couldst foretell this captivity which hath happened to thyself, unless what thou now sayest be a vain thing, in order to avoid the rage that is risen against thyself." To which Josephus replied, "I did foretell to the people of Jotapata that they would be taken on the forty-seventh day, and that I should be caught alive by the Romans." Now when Vespasian had inquired of the captives privately about these predictions, he found them to be true, and then he began to believe those that concerned himself. Yet did he not set Josephus at liberty from his hands, but bestowed on him suits of clothes, and other precious gifts; he treated him also in a very obliging manner, and continued so to do, Titus still joining his interest till the honours that were done him [my correction].

Much has been said about Josephus' mention of other supposedly messianic figures (i.e. other than Jesus and Vespasian). Various researchers and commentators have pointed out that in two of Josephus' works (i.e. *War* [c. 75 C.E.] and *Ant.* [c. 93-4 C.E.]), he refers to the following possible "messianic contenders", viz.:

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it&go.x=24&go.y=8 [24 July 2014].

1. Judas the son of Hezekias or Ezekias (the arch-robber/zealot) (4 B.C.E.) (*War*, 2, 4, 1 / 55–56); *Ant.* 17, 10, 5 / 271–272);

2. Simon of Peraea or Perea (4 B.C.E.) (*War*, 2, 4, 2 / 57–59; *Ant.* 17, 10, 6 / 273-277);

3. Athronges the shepherd (4 B.C.E.) (*Ant.* 17, 10, 7 / 278–284);

4. Judas the Galilean[152] (6 or 7 C.E.) (*War*, 2, 8, 1 / 117–118; *Ant.* 18, 1, 1 / 4 -10 and 1, 6 / 23–25);

5. Sadduc the Pharisee (Mentioned together with Judas the Galilean) (6 or 7 C.E.) (*Ant.* 18, 1, 1 / 4–10);

6. John the Baptist[153] (c. 28 C.E.) (*Ant.* 18, 5, 2 / 116–119);

7. Unnamed wicked teacher of Mosaic law and his three partners (*Ant.* 18, 3, 5 / 81–84);

8. Unnamed Samaritan liar (36 C.E.) (*Ant.* 18, 4, 1 / 85–87);

9. Herod Agrippa (44 C.E.) (*Ant.* 19, 8, 2 / 343–361;

10. Theudas the charlatan (45 C.E.) (*Ant.* 20, 5, 1 / 97–99);

11. The Egypto-Jewish charlatan (52–58 C.E.) (*War*, 2, 13, 5 / 261–263; *Ant.* 20, 8, 6 / 169–171);

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[152] The Jewish Encyclopedia mentions that it is quite likely that Judas the Galilean is identical to Judas the son of Hezekias (Grätz, 1853–1875: iii, 251, 260, 364; Schürer, 1886: 420 and 486). Unfortunately, here both Grätz and Schürer seem to conflate the identity of Judas the Galilean with Judas, son of Hezekias. A closer inspection reveals that this is not likely to be the case. Judas the son of Hezikias or Hezekiah, whilst hailing from Galilee, was based at Sepphoris (confirmed twice by Josephus [*Jewish Antiquities*, 17, 10, 5 / 271–272; *War*, 2, 4, 1 / 56]). This was sometime either during the prefecture of *Cuspius Fadus* (c. 44–46 C.E.) or *Tiberias Iulius Alexander* (c. 46–48 C.E.). Judas the Galilean was based at Gamala (confirmed twice by Josephus [*War*, 2, 8, 1 / 117–118; C.Ap., 18, 1, 1 / 4–10]) during the procuratorship of *Coponius* (c. 6–9 C.E.).

[153] Obviously, the reference to John the Baptist is also a suspected interpolation but is included here solely for sake of clarity, neutrality and comprehensiveness. It will also be noticed that John the Baptist is not referred to in derogatory terms by Josephus and accordingly does not fit the normal pattern.

12. An anonymous Zealot charlatan (59 C.E.) (*Ant.* 20, 8, 10 / 188);

13. Manahem the son of Judas the Galilean (66 C.E.) (*War*, 2, 17, 8 / 433–440; 9 / 441–448);

14. John son of Levi (a.k.a. John of Gischala or Gishala) (c. 67–70 C.E.) (*War*, 2, 21, 1 / 585–589; 4, 2, 1; 9, 10 / 559–565; 11 / 566–574; 5, 3, 1 / 98–105; 6, 1 / 254; 6, 1, 7 / 72; 7, 8, 1 / 263–264);

15. Simon the son of Giora (69–70 C.E.); (*War*, 2, 19, 2 / 521; 22, 2 / 652–654; 4, 9, 8 / 538–544; 10 / 556–565; 11 / 573–574; 5, 3, 1 / 105; 6, 1 / 248–253; 3 / 266–274; 4 / 278–279; 13, 1 / 527–533; 6, 1, 7 / 72; 7, 2, 1 / 25; 2 / 26–36; 8, 1 / 265–267); and

16. Jonathan the weaver (73 C.E.) (*War*, 7, 11, 1 / 437–442).

Researchers often point out that Josephus mentions these individuals almost solely in the context of their claims to be messianic. However, a closer reading reveals no such intention on Josephus' part. If anything, he is speaking disparagingly about individuals who he has little or no respect for and whom he believes are working against the established mores of the *bona fide* Jewish tradition.

Josephus is concerned about the state of affairs in his homeland. As confirmed by authorities such as Bilde, (1988: 18–22), Josephus lived at a time of great upheaval and crisis for the Jewish nation. He was primarily concerned with its survival and he had no time for anyone who would hasten the destruction of that which he cherished above all else. He also had nothing but disdain for those who would misuse religion to mislead the masses.

For example, during the procuratorship of Festus[154], Josephus (*War*, 2, 13, 4 / 259[155]) informs his reader that:

> These were such men who deceived and deluded the people under pretense of Divine inspiration, but were in fact for procuring innovations and changes

[154] *Porcius Festus* (c. 59–62 C.E.).

[155] English translation according to Whiston (Tr.) s.a. Flavius Josephus: The Judean War in *Project on Ancient Cultural Engagement* [Online]. Available: http://pace-ancient.mcmaster.ca/york/york/showText?book=2&chapter=13&textChunk=whistonSection&chunkId=4&text=wars&version=whiston&direction=&tab=&layout=split&go.x=18&go.y=3 [24 July 2014].

> of the government. These men prevailed with the multitude to act like madmen, and went before them into the wilderness, pretending that God would there show them the signals of liberty.

Josephus even largely blames the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple on the contemptible activities of those who would even try to claim divine inspiration and/or who try to establish a following. Clearly, he is very specific about his obdurate stance on anyone who would try to use religion in misleading the general populace–especially a society that was under unbearable stress due to the Roman oppression–and warns that God himself punishes those who do so. In his *War*, 6, 5, 2 / 285–287[156] Josephus confirms that:

> A false prophet was the occasion of these people's destruction, who had made a public proclamation in the city that very day, that God commanded them to get upon the temple, and that there they should receive miraculous signs of their deliverance. Now there was then a great number of false prophets suborned by the tyrants to impose on the people, who denounced this to them, that they should wait for deliverance from God; and this was in order to keep them from deserting, and that they might be buoyed up above fear and care by such hopes. Now a man that is in adversity does easily comply with such promises; for when such a seducer makes him believe that he shall be delivered from those miseries which oppress him, then it is that the patient is full of hopes of such his deliverance. **Thus were the miserable people persuaded by these deceivers, and such as belied God himself; while they did not attend nor give credit to the signs that were so evident, and did so plainly foretell their future desolation, but, like men infatuated, without either eyes to see or minds to consider, did not regard the denunciations that God made to them** (my emphasis).

These kinds of accounts, directed against political zealotry and which, at the very best, only obliquely alludes to the individual in question claiming to be divinely sanctioned (let alone claiming to be some prophesied (*Mashiaḥ*) is often used as the weakest of evidence to support the claims that Josephus is speaking about messianic claimants.

However, apart from such terms as "*ho Christos*" and "*Christou*" etc. which are specifically reserved for his purported two references to Jesus in his

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[156] English translation according to Whiston (Tr.) s.a. Josephus: The Judean War in *Project on Ancient Cultural Engagement* [Online]. Available: http://pace-ancient.mcmaster.ca/york/york/showText?book=6&chapter=5&textChunk=whistonSection&chunkId=2&text=wars&version=whiston&direction=&tab=&layout=split&go.x=22&go.y=8 [24 July 2014].

Antiquities, Josephus never uses any Greek derivative of the Hebrew term "*Mashiaḥ*" when referring to these political and/or religious upstarts in any of his extant works. In fact, the nearest he comes to indicating more direct divine aspirations on behalf of the offending individuals, is when he uses the terms "prophet" and "false prophet".

The following parallel accounts, concerning the activities of an unnamed Egyptian Jew in c. 52–58 C.E. well confirm Josephus' normal infuriated and disdainful approach when discussing the activities of individual zealots and political parvenus within the Jewish community. For example, Josephus (*War*, 2, 13, 5 / 261– 263[157]) writes:

> But there was an Egyptian false prophet that did the Jews more mischief than the former; for he was a cheat and pretended to be a prophet also, and got together thirty thousand men that were deluded by him; these he led round about from the wilderness to the mount which was called the Mount of Olives, and was ready to break into Jerusalem by force from that place; and if he could but once conquer the Roman garrison and the people, he intended to domineer over them by the assistance of those guards of his that were to break into the city with him.

In addition, Josephus (*Ant.* 20, 8, 6 / 169–172[158]) gives the following account:

> Moreover, there came out of Egypt about this time to Jerusalem one that said he was a prophet and advised the multitude of the common people to go along with him to the Mount of Olives, as it was called, which lay over against the city, and at the distance of five furlongs. He said further, that he would show them from hence how, at his command, the walls of Jerusalem would fall down; and he promised them that he would procure them an entrance into the city through those walls, when they were fallen down.

In these two passages, written some 22 years apart, Josephus describes exactly the same incident whilst specifically using the terms "false prophet"

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[157] English translation according to Whiston (Tr.) s.a. Flavius Josephus: The Judean War in *Project on Ancient Cultural Engagement* [Online]. Available: http://pace-ancient.mcmaster.ca/york/york/showText?book=2&chapter=13&textChunk=whistonSection&chunkId=5&text=wars&version=whiston&direction=&tab=&layout=split&go.x=18&go.y=14 [24 July 2014].

[158] English translation according to Whiston (Tr.) s.a. Flavius Josephus: The Judean Antiquities in *Project on Ancient Cultural Engagement* [Online]. Available: http://pace-ancient.mcmaster.ca/york/york/showText?book=20&chapter=8&textChunk=whistonSection&chunkId=6&text=anti&version=whiston&direction=&tab=&layout=split [24 July 2014].

and "prophet" or more correctly "one who speaks for God and interprets His divine will") to describe the object of his undisguised vehemence. He pointedly refers to the Egyptian with a Greek term "*goes*" which could be translated as either "magician", "wizard", "sorcerer", "charlatan" or "cheat".

Another account that is informative is Josephus' reference to an individual called Theudas. In *Ant.* 20, 5, 1 / 97–99[159], it is written:

> Now it came to pass, while Fadus was procurator of Judea, that a certain magician, whose name was Theudas, persuaded a great part of the people to take their effects with them, and follow him to the river Jordan; for he told them he was a prophet and that he would, by his own command, divide the river, and afford them an easy passage over it; and many were deluded by his words.

Josephus is careful to disavow his reader of any valid spiritual/divine currency on the part of Theudas. Josephus also refers to the object of his disdain as a "charlatan". He also specifically tells his reader that Theudas only *claimed* to be a prophet and clearly insinuates that he made ridiculous/false declarations about his ability to perform supernatural actions which it can be safely assumed were modelled on the biblical accounts of Moses dividing the Red (Reed) Sea. In short, even if Theudas claimed to be a "prophet" he clearly was not one, and furthermore Josephus certainly never claimed him to be either a messiah or someone who claimed messianic status.

Apart from the *TF*, in each and every account concerning a political/religious arriviste, Josephus speaks contemptuously, employing negative epitaphs. For example he refers to the unnamed Samaritan man (*Ant.* 18, 4, 1 / 85) as a "liar". He refers to John son of Levi (*War*, 2, 21, 1 / 586) as a "ready liar" and an anonymous zealot (*Ant.* 20, 8, 10 / 188) as a "charlatan/imposter". Finally, Josephus refers to the charlatan, Jonathan the weaver (*War*, 7, 11, 1 / 437) as "a vile person"–more literally a "man oppressed by toils".

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[159] English translation according to Whiston (Tr.) s.a. Flavius Josephus: The Judean Antiquities in *Project on Ancient Cultural Engagement* [Online]. Available: http://pace-ancient.mcmaster.ca/york/york/showText?book=20&chapter=5&textChunk=whistonSection&chunkId=1&text=anti&version=whiston&direction=&tab=&layout=split&go.x=32&go.y=6 [24 July 2014].

In addition to his disapproving appellations, Josephus also mostly gives very detailed pejorative accounts of the despicable actions of these Jewish individuals that certain scholars would seem to be happy to claim as "messianic". For example, (cf. *War*, 4, 9, 8 / 538–544), where there is nothing spiritual, fair handed or divine in the way Simon the son of Giora deals with the issue of reclaiming his kidnapped wife from the zealots. Undeniably, Simon takes out his understandable anger and acrimony on both the innocent and guilty alike, committing the most despicable and inhumane of actions.

How can an individual like Simon, the son of Giora, in any way be viewed as a candidate for messianic status, whether posing as a kingly or priestly manifestation? Certainly, Josephus (*War*, 7, 8, 1 / 265)[160], makes it very clear what he thinks of Simon when he states:

> Again, therefore, what mischief was there which Simon the son of Giora did not do? or what kind of abuses did he abstain from as to those very free-men who had set him up for a tyrant?

Again, in (*War*, 7, 8, 1 / 267)[161], Josephus sums up his feelings regarding the distinctly anti-Jewish, non-spiritual and wicked character of all the leaders and their followers involved in the political struggle at the time when he states:

> The Idumeans also strove with these men who should be guilty of the greatest madness! for they [all], vile wretches as they were, cut the throats of the high priests, that so no part of a religious regard to God. might be preserved

Even if allusions to these various individuals' claims to messianic status were to be found in some reliable source external to Josephus' writings[162] it

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[160] English Translation according to Whiston (Tr.) 1895. *Flavius Josephus. The Works of Flavius Josephus,* in *Perseus Digital Library* [Online]. Available: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0148%3Abook%3D7%3Awhiston+chapter%3D8%3Awhiston+section%3D1 [6 August 2014].

[161] English Translation according to Whiston (Tr.) 1895. *Flavius Josephus. The Works of Flavius Josephus,* in *Perseus Digital Library* [Online]. Available: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0148%3Abook%3D7%3Awhiston+chapter%3D8%3Awhiston+section%3D1 [6 August 2014].

[162] A good example here is the recent discovery (c. 2000 C.E.) of the so-called Gabriel Stone or Jeselsohn Stone–a metre-tall stone tablet claimed to have been

is quite clear that (apart from his two alleged references to Jesus as the "Christ"), he personally, at no time, considers any of these individuals to be either messianic and/or superhuman and/or divine in nature or to have even claimed specific messianic status for themselves. In addition, it should be noted that most scholars involved in this debate since at least the sixteenth century[163] tend to refer to certain of these so-called "messianic claimants" as "prophets". Hence, most scholars will make references to, inter alia, the "Samaritan prophet" (36 C.E.), the "prophet Theudas" (45 C.E.), the "Egyptian Jewish prophet" (52–58 C.E.) and the "anonymous prophet" (59 C.E.). On closer inspection it is clear that apart from Theudas and the unknown individual from Egypt none of these characters are even referred to as being "prophets" or even "false prophets" in Josephus' text, let alone being "messiahs" and/or claimants to messiahship.

Furthermore, even in the case of the Egyptian, cited above (*War*, 2, 13, 5 / 261–263; *Ant.* 20, 8, 6 / 169–171) and Theudas (*Ant.* 20, 5, 1 / 97–99), Josephus does not actually refer to either charlatan as a "prophet". He calls the Egyptian "false prophet" and/or he states that the individual concerned only claimed to be a "prophet" thus making it perfectly clear by the context that neither claimant was really a "prophet".

It is significant that some scholars seem to have ignored their sources and merely assume without question that these specific Josephan characters were all messianic and in addition, were even in some cases called "prophets"–even employing this specific nomenclature when describing them in their own commentaries.

Lastly, is it not peculiar that many more eminent Jews than the ones cited above–ones who were clearly lauded by the general Jewish population in Jerusalem and were even given quite favourable reviews by Josephus–are not considered to be messianic claimants by the various commentators? For example, why is Matthias, the son of Boethus (*War*, 5, 13, 1 / 527) (who

found on the banks of the Dead Sea and which comprises 87 lines of prophetic text dated by some as early as the late second or early first century B.C.E. In this regard, Knohl has suggested that a messianic individual mentioned on the stone might well be Josephus' Simon of Peraea and further he possibly served as a role model for a later Jesus of Nazareth. However, given that Simon of Peraea died in 4 B.C.E. and the inscription is far more likely to refer to someone who lived up to a century and a half earlier, these undeveloped and sensationalistic claims have little basis to be taken seriously unless more critical scholarship and reliable data becomes available. Cf. Knohl, 2011.

[163] Cf. Mason, 2003: 227.

was clearly a popular spiritual leader in his day and who suffered torture and death at the hands of Simon the son of Giora), passed over for this designation? What about Josephus' (*War*, 1, 3, 5 / 78–80), account of Judas the Essene's seemingly miraculous abilities, who, according to him, "had never failed or deceived men in his predictions"? Surely, here is a better candidate for "prophet" since, according to Josephus, he actually delivered on his forecasts! Josephus (*Ant.* 14, 9, 4 / 172–176), also speaks fairly well of Samaias–a member of the *Sanhedrin*–who he describes as a "righteous man" who was "above all fear" and who alone had the nerve and resolve to stand up to Herod.

Given this amplified background, Josephus' *deliberate* emphasis of actual Christocentric, messianic status for Jesus and the fact that he *does not* refer to Jesus as being or claiming to be "*prophêtes*" or even "*goes*" (as he would normally do when speaking about a Jewish political/religious upstart), has to be seen as either extremely significant and/or completely out of character. This fact emphasises the more mainstream (albeit conventional) wisdom, that Josephus was always a confirmed, practicing Jew and never a clandestine Christian and thus could never have composed the *TF*.

Josephus' knowledge of the Messiah/Christ

Regardless of whether there was an earlier form of the *TF* or not, or whether or not the text (interpolated or otherwise) contained the wording "he was the Messiah" or "he was believed to be the Messiah", the very employment of the term "Messiah" both as concept and as a translation of *"ho Christos"* is highly problematic. Indeed, much of the primary debate over the *TF* is concerned with the very employment and valid interpretation of the term *"ho Christos"*.

Doherty (2009: 541), as a confirmed sceptic and advocate of a mythical Jesus has no hesitation in confirming that Josephus could not and would not have made use of the term *"ho Christos"*: "Its appearance in the phrase 'he was the Messiah' is part of a sentiment which, as it stands, cannot be by Josephus".

Doherty also points out (2009: 541–542) that its modified rendition, viz.: "he was *believed to be* the Messiah" is highly reminiscent of the wording employed by Jerome in his Latin translation of the *TF* in his *DVI* (*De Viris Illustribus*) 13, written as late as the fourth century C.E.

Also, as has been alluded to already, apart from the *TF* and the *JP* (i.e. *Ant.* 20, 9, 1 / 197–203), Josephus does not employ this term in any of his extant works. If, as certain Christian scholars claim, this was a well-known term in Josephus' time, then it should be seen as significant that he consistently appears to be totally unaware of it in normal parlance except the two instances when he purportedly refers to Jesus.

In point of fact, as confirmed by Doherty (2008: 51–52; 2009: 545–547), and as is still largely the case today, there was no constant understanding of this concept in the first century C.E. within Jewish circles let alone amongst most Greeks or Romans. If one refers to Qumran literature it would seem that there may even have been at least two different types of messiah expected by certain Jewish communities in the so-called intertestamental period, viz.: an anointed priest and an anointed king (cf. Vermes, 1997: 60n–61 and 353; Hurst, 1999: 157–180).

The point is that even today, with a wealth of scholarship directed at this pertinent issue, argument still rages concerning the specific Jewish understanding of this term and its possible evolution as a concept throughout recorded history. Thus, even if non-Jewish readers of the first century C.E., fully immersed in Jewish politics and culture, read the term *"ho Christos"*, there is absolutely no way they could possibly have fully understood this expression. For example, only a more modern, literalist, reader would associate the term "Christ" with the incarnation in human form of the principal Jewish deity. Had any Jewish readers of the first century C.E. understood this term in a similar way, they would have considered it to be blasphemy.

This obvious point is amplified by Mason (2003: 227–228) who authoritatively informs his reader that the term "*Christos*" more likely meant "wetted" or "greased" to a Greek-speaking audience in the first century C.E. Here there should not be a conflation between "*Christos*" in Greek and "*Mashiaḥ*" (Messiah) in Hebrew. Only the latter term refers specifically to the anointing of a righteous king.[164] Obviously in later times,

[164]With reference to Werblowsky (1987), the Hebrew verb "*Mashiaḥ*" refers to the anointing of either objects or individuals with oil for both secular as well as sacral purposes. Hence, *Mashiaḥ* may refer to any individual anointed with oil. This verb is often simply translated as "Messiah"–a term which carries a multitude of quite different connotations. Originally, *Mashiaḥ* referred to such individuals as Samson and even non-Jews like Cyrus the Great (c. 600–530 B.C.E.). Later, the term became more closely associated with Messianism. VanderKam (2003: 134) explains that passages from such ancient books as Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel are considered to

these terms became interchangeable but at the time of Josephus this relationship would not have been known or understood. In this context Mason humorously quips that in the context of an individual who was ignorant of Jewish tradition or Christian dogma, the pointed statement that this particular "Jesus was 'the wetted' or perhaps 'the greased' would sound most peculiar".

Here it is sometimes claimed that the absence of a reference to "*Mashiaḥ*" in his writings indicates that perhaps Josephus was merely being "sensitive" to Roman feelings. Here the claim is made that he had to be careful since he was by then in the employ of the Flavian dynasty. As has already been demonstrated, it is also true that Josephus (*War*, 6, 5, 4 / 312–13) seems to claim that Vespasian fulfils Jewish prophecy but certainly not in the context of say a Jewish "*Mashiaḥ*" or "anointed one" and certainly, he never employs the actual term "Messiah":

Lastly, if one considers the highly improbably theory that Josephus was secretly a Christian believer–an issue that has been touched on previously–then one must ask why the apologist Origen (cf. *COM,* X, 17 / 5268–5269; *Cels*. I, 47), was able to confirm that Josephus *did not accept* Jesus as the "Christ" (i.e. as understood in much later third-century C.E. Christian parlance)?

Josephus' treatment of other individuals named "Jesus"

Closely related to the previously discussed *"ho Christos"* issue, is the obvious concern over how Josephus (as the presumed author of the *TF*), refers to Jesus. This is telling, when compared to many of the other individuals mentioned in his works, many of whom coincidentally share the same name.

Leidner (2000: 19–28), who has devoted some careful thought to this very issue, points out that in the well-known Loeb edition of Josephus' works, "Jesus" turns out to be one of the most common names referred to by Josephus in his four books. In this context, Leidner (2000: 19–20), refers to the name "Jesus" appearing 21 times in the Loeb index. For the sake of clarity these references (some of which are possibly duplications of a particular individual) are reproduced below, almost exactly as Leidner

be messianic. However, in point of fact, Messianism developed much later than these texts. Indeed, despite much wishful thinking, there are no Jewish texts before the second century B.C.E. which make mention of a "Messiah".

presents them:

1. Jesus son of Naue;
2. Jesus son of Saul;
3. Jesus, high priest, son of Phineas;
4. Jesus son of the high priest Jozadak;
5. Jesus son of Joiada;
6. Jesus, high priest, son of Simon;
7. Jesus, high priest, son of Phabes;
8. Jesus, high priest, son of Seë;
9. **Jesus the Christ;**
10. Jesus son of Damnaeus, became high priest;
11. Jesus son of Gamliel, became high priest;
12. Jesus son of Sapphas;
13. **Jesus, chief priest**, probably to be identified with 10 or 11;
14. Jesus son of Gamalas, high priest;
15. **Jesus, brigand chief on borderland of Ptolemais**;
16. Jesus son of Sapphias;
17. **Jesus brother of Chares**;
18. **Jesus a Galilean**, perhaps to be identified with 15;
19. **Jesus in ambuscade**, perhaps to be identified with 16;
20. Jesus, priest, son of Thebuthi; and

21. Jesus son of Ananias, rude peasant, who prophesies the fall of Jerusalem.

It is a well-known Jewish custom that men are referred to as "son of" (*ben*) "so and so". Based purely on the Loeb list, Josephus clearly conforms to this age-old tradition but seemingly breaks with it on five distinct occasions (cf. emboldened names); four of which refer to individuals caught up in some minor event; and one which refers to Jesus the Christ.

Leidner (2000: 19–21) correctly stresses the fact that Josephus consistently makes a point of designating familial relationships for all the Jewish men called "Jesus" except for number nine and 15 on the Loeb list. The latter exception, referring to "Jesus, brigand chief" can be understood because of the qualified context. In this context, Leidner (2000: 20) emphasises that even in the four cases of individuals involved in minor events and also called "Jesus", the reader is always aware of certain qualifying factors such as an indication of time and place and other important pieces of historical information which tell us that we are dealing with real, authentic people. However, it goes without saying that the cursory *TF* does not offer the reader much in the way of context or other instructive features.

In addition, as Leidner (2000: 19–21) carefully substantiates, we know from Josephus' many writings that he was overtly proud of his priestly ancestry and high status within the community. Moreover, especially in the case of other Jews he comments on, he is particularly concerned with their respective ranks, status and bearing within the Jewish community. Undeniably, Josephus is characteristically very quick to label or identify any other Jew according to his status and claimed lineal descent.

As evidence of this tendency, Leidner (2000: 20) highlights the fact that ten of the names in the Loeb list each refer to Jewish men who have priestly credentials. In each and every case, Josephus is careful to specify their ancestry.

In the *TF*, Josephus tells his reader nothing about Jesus in terms of his lineal descent, his status in the community, his background or (if we ignore the possible import of the *JP* (*James Passage*) (discussed later), his familial connections.

Within this established context, Leidner (2000: 21) finds it most unusual, that Jesus the Christ is not recorded as being say "Jesus son of Joseph". He subsequently comes to the only logical conclusion that this phrase was

written by a Christian for a Christian readership at a later time. A time when everyone clearly understood who Jesus was. Furthermore, only a Christian audience would automatically consider their Jesus to be the "son of God" and not seek his (human) filial relationship.

Lastly, Leidner (2000: 23–27) makes a very important point concerning Josephus' apparent silence as regards an historical context for his supposed reference to Jesus as the "Christ" in the *TF*. Certainly, amongst the many individuals called "Jesus", three stand out in particular because they each in their own way have parallels to the gospel accounts of Jesus. The deaths of these three individuals, each named "Jesus", are recorded by Josephus as having been the cause of some disaster affecting Jerusalem brought about by divine retribution. Leidner (2000: 24) sees this as a "basic motif" with Josephus. This is especially true, since he had in fact deserted from the Jewish cause and ultimately allied himself to the Romans. In this latter regard, Josephus needed to justify his desertion, both to his fellow Jews as well as possibly to himself. Leidner (2000: 24) confirms that Josephus believed that the Jewish cause was lost and even saw the atrocities of the Romans as divine retribution for what he saw as Jewish transgressions. Therefore, Josephus sought opportunities in his text to justify, inter alia, the destruction of Jerusalem in c. 70 C.E.

Leidner refers specifically to Josephus' account of Jesus son of Joiada (*Ant.* 11, 7, 1 / 298–300), Jesus, son of Gamalas (*War*, 4, 5, 2 / 323) and Jesus son of Ananias (*War*, 6, 5, 3 / 300–309). Each of these Jews was slain in some dramatic way in Jerusalem and at a time very close to the one in which Josephus lived. Indeed, Jesus son of Ananias died during the destruction of the Temple. Based on his writings, Josephus may actually have witnessed the destruction first-hand. The following typical example (cf. *War*, 5, 9, 3 / 362)[165] is pertinent:

> So Josephus went round about the [Temple] wall, and tried to find a place that was out of the reach of their darts, and yet within their hearing, and besought them, in many words, to spare themselves, to spare their country and their temple, and not to be more obdurate in these cases than foreigners themselves.

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[165] English Translation according to Whiston (Tr.) 1895. *Flavius Josephus. The Works of Flavius Josephus,* in *Perseus Digital Library* [Online]. Available: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0148%3Abook%3D5%3Awhiston%20chapter%3D9%3Awhiston%20section%3D3 [11 August 2014].

Certainly he was present during Vespasian's triumph in Rome soon after the event. Furthermore, many scholars have seen this specific account as a possible model for certain gospel narratives concerning, inter alia, aspects of Jesus' ministry, trial, crucifixion and prophecy concerning the destruction of the Temple.

Leidner (2000: 35), for one, feels that if Josephus did actually compose the *TF* he must have been fully aware of the Christian tradition that Jerusalem was destroyed in divine retribution for the death of Jesus. Given his specific treatment of the other three holy men named "Jesus" coupled with his positive appreciation of Jesus the Christ in the *TF* strongly suggests that the *TF* is an anomaly.

Gospel characteristics of the *TF*

The *Emmaus Narrative*

Before looking at the arguments which support either of these disputed passages from *Antiquities* having any degree of authenticity, it would do well to briefly consider the more recent findings of Goldberg (1995: 59–77). According to him, what has previously been overlooked is that the *TF* reveals what Goldberg (1995: 59) terms "a number of surprising coincidences" when compared with a cluster of specific verses (i.e. Luke, 24: 19–21; 25–27) (c. 60–c. 100 C.E.).

A transcript of these verses, which Goldberg refers to as the *Emmaus Narrative* from Luke 24: 19–21 and 25–27) [166] is as follows:

> "What things?" he asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place.
>
> Then he said unto them, "O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

[166] English (NIV) text according to William D. Mounce and Robert H. Mounce, *The Zondervan Greek and English Interlinear New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 340-41.

> He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

Goldberg (1995: 59–77), specifically compares such aspects as the structure and word usage of these passages with the extant version of the *TF*, which for convenience is again reproduced in English below:

> Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.[167]

Goldberg believes that in the original Greek, the *Emmaus Narrative* from Luke and the *TF* demonstrate significant similarities in structure and form. Of particular interest is his claim (1995: 68–69), that the precise grammatical form of "the third day" occurs nowhere else except in Luke 24: 21 and the *TF.* Goldberg (1995: 64–65), also claims that he has found some nineteen areas of correspondence (as well as areas of non-correspondence). He has also conducted spot checks to find other comparable biblical texts which deal with largely the same content as the *TF.* In the process, he found that, at the very best, other *NT* texts, tend to yield about half the degree of correspondence as found in the *Emmaus Narrative* from Luke.

Goldberg (1995: 66) emphasises that the *Emmaus Narrative* more faithfully resembles the *TF* in its content and order than any other known text of equivalent age and accordingly argues that the author of Luke probably borrowed the *Emmaus Narrative* from "an existing tradition". This source, he maintains, was most likely the same one that Josephus (or a later pseudo-Josephus) drew upon. This important issue will need to be returned to at a later stage. Depending on a particular scholar's worldview, it can serve as decisive evidence for either total interpolation or even complete

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[167] English Translation according to Whiston (Tr.) 1895. *Flavius Josephus. The Works of Flavius Josephus,* in *Perseus Digital Library* [Online]. Available: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text: 1999.01.0145 [30 May 2012].

authenticity.

His findings also shed some additional light on two of the utterances from the *TF* which are most often considered to be obvious interpolations:

- "if it be lawful to call him a man"; and
- "He was the Christ"

According to Goldberg (1995: 64), these passages do not have correspondences in the Emmaus passage at comparable positions.

Hence, based on his findings, Goldberg (1995: 66) puts forward two similar hypotheses within the context of Josephus being the *actual* author of the *TF*:

1. Josephus created his own description of Jesus from information he had collected. The description is dominated by his selection of facts, as determined by his opinions and reactions to stories about Jesus.

2. Josephus rigidly adhered to a pre-existing text that described Jesus, making alterations only to suit his written style. His text is dominated by a historian's motivation to record faithfully a primary source that had come to his attention.

The coincidences with the *Emmaus Narrative* tend to support the second possibility. Also, in terms of the main argument of this book, it is important to note that Goldberg clearly favours the second hypothesis.

We could countenance the possibility that the author of Luke (and by association, Acts) may have used the writings of Josephus for source material (an interesting idea put forward by Mason in 2003). This also allows for the speculation that Josephus did not write the *TF.* Instead it was the work of a later Christian apologist. If so, the *TF* was based on that latter individual's in-depth knowledge of Christian literature and Christology. Obviously, this would have to include such passages as the *Emmaus Narrative* in Luke.

Even Goldberg takes note of such a possibility, which, in keeping with his worldview, he does not seem to feel is very likely. Indeed, Goldberg (1995: 66) explains why he personally believes it is more probable that Josephus firmly followed a pre-existent text that portrayed Jesus. Here, inadvertently, Goldberg makes an important observation: The textual coincidences that

appear in the two passages either reveal a chance occurrence or prove that the *TF* was written by a later Christian hand-one who had read Luke.

Surely, given the known facts, it is far more likely that someone wrote this passage sometime well after the second century C.E. This individual was well-versed in the canonical gospel accounts as well as cognisant of quite evolved Christian concepts, including the avowed divinity of Jesus. As such, it could not have been composed by a Jewish historian living in the first century C.E.

Goldberg (1995: 73) even contemplates this obvious solution to his quandary. He writes that a "Christian interpolator" may have altered or even "forged it entire, under the influence of the Emmaus narrative". Despite this admission, he still goes on to dismiss the entire idea, by naively concluding that such a hypothetical forger would not have had the skill to imitate Josephus' writing style!

I do not agree. I think it would be very easy for someone well versed with Josephus to emulate his writing style. Further, Goldberg has not considered the known historical context. We must equally consider the relationships between the *TF* and *other* Christian beliefs, not only the similarities between the *TF* and the *Emmaus Narrative*.

When one undertakes this critical exercise it becomes immediately obvious, given the wealth of information contained in the remarkably short *TF*, that far more similarity exists between the *TF* and Christian beliefs in general than just the *Emmaus Narrative*. For example, the reader is informed in a mere 89 words the following very concise information:

1. Jesus actually existed and *still* exists;

2. Jesus was wise;

3. Jesus was and still is something superior/apart from mortal humans;

4. Jesus was a genuine miracle worker;

5. Jesus was a teacher of the truth;

6. Jesus attracted and ministered to both Jew and Greek;

7. Jesus was the Messiah;

8. Jesus was condemned by the Jewish leadership;
9. Jesus was sentenced to death by Pontius Pilate;
10. Jesus died on a cross;
11. Jesus rose from the dead on the third day;
12. Jesus appeared to his loved ones after his death;
13. Jesus had and still has devoted disciples/followers;
14. Jesus fulfils divine prophecy;
15. There are "ten thousand" divine proofs concerning his status; and
16. Jesus (and/or his message) continues to have a successful legacy.

Olson (2013: 99) takes note that it was exactly this obvious format as a confession of the Christian faith that first alerted academics in the sixteenth century to its possible fraudulent nature.

Gospel flavour?

There are claims made by advocates of partial interpolation. Here, it is supposed that the removal of the obvious Christian layers reveals the residual and "authentic" Josephan text. These hypothetical Christian layers are often likened to what is termed "gospel flavour".

These researchers believe that if the gospel flavour is removed the *TF* becomes non-Christian and would have the nature miracles of Jesus reduced to mere conjuring or sleight of hand. In addition, there would be no overt anti-Semitism. Moreover, the Greeks (Gentiles) would still be described as being "drawn" to Jesus. This latter point is most important because, as will be dealt with shortly, it does not agree (on the face of it) with the canonical gospel portrayal of certain events.

Thus the typically conservative scholar will point out that once the overt Christian sentiments have been excised from the *TF*, what is left will serve as good evidence that the *TF* was *not* written by a Christian hand. Therefore, it will more likely reflect Josephus' worldview and context. Now, as will be

seen, even after the removal of blatant Christian content, the expurgated *TF still* remains overtly Christian. Also, even if what remained was not explicitly Christian, it should be seen as an inept exercise to remove what is obviously Christian propaganda and hope that based on what little remains we will have a non-Christian text! Indeed, the mere removal of some of the key words in the text does not mitigate against possible Christian proselytisation. Despite this obvious fact, the majority of conservative scholars (e.g. Meier 1991: 56–68[168]; Dunn, 2003: 141) still seem to set great store by this eccentric approach.

The historian and critical sceptic[169], Olson (2013) also takes issue with this senseless procedure. One cannot merely remove what appears to be "Christian" and then claim that the expurgated version is too restrained to be Christian!

Olson (2013) has a specific problem with Meier's argument (1991). Meier mentions that within those portions of the *TF* that he considers to be Christian interpolations, in some instances, the word usage seems to be more akin to Josephus than, say, the *NT*. As a consequence, Meier (1991: 83 n. 42) argues, in the case of the three suspected interpolations (i.e. *TF*, *JP* and *BP*), it is their content alone that makes them suspect. Olson (2013a: 100), specifically sums up Meier's methodology as being "seriously flawed". In short, it is not possible to neatly separate out Christian and non-Christian segments on the basis of either the *TF*'s content or employment of language. Olson is understandably sceptical of Meier's opinion that the language of the *NT* can in any way provide the historian with a reliable indication of the specific word usage of, say, early Christians. Olson (2013a: 100 n. 13) also confirms that while Christian writers were undeniably predisposed to follow the idiom of the *NT*, they were not regulated by it.

The *TF* also pointedly refers to Jesus' appeal to both Jew and Greek Gentile alike. In the light of our present knowledge concerning, inter alia, the Gospel of Matthew (c. 80–c. 110 C.E.) the *TF* seems to indicate a contemporaneous instance of religious anti-Semitism. For example, the *TF* mentions the *prôtôn andrôn* (principal men) "amongst us, had condemned him to the

[168] To be fair to Meier, although firmly convinced of his point of view, he does have the good grace to warn his reader that it is possible for some equivocality of meaning in sections of the passage that he considers to be genuine.

[169] Olson confirms his critical stance when he states: "…I'll try to make clear why I am skeptical toward common scholarly claims about what an early Christian writer would or would not have written in a brief passage about Jesus." Olson, 2013.

cross". In the latter regard, one cannot help but draw the inference that these "principal men" are none other than the Jewish priests mentioned in the canonical gospels. Finally, the text highlights the religious dogma of the resurrection ("for he appeared to them alive again on the third day"). It also underscores Jesus' possible divinity by reference to the "divine prophets" who had prophesied his "wonderful works".

Issues relating to the substantiated provenance of the *TF*

If Josephus was really the author of the *TF*, why did no active Christian scholar or apologist (i.e. apart from Eusebius) make reference to it before the fifth century C.E.? The following fifteen pre-fifth century Christian apologists were quite familiar with the works of Josephus, yet they make no mention of the *TF*:

1. Justin Martyr (c. 100 / 103–165 C.E.);
2. Melito of Sardis (d. c. 180 C.E.);
3. Theophilus of Antioch (d. c. 183 / 185 C.E.);
4. Irenaeus (Bishop of Lugdunum) (c. 115 / 142–c. 202 C.E.);
5. Clement of Alexandria (c. 157–211 / 216 C.E.);
6. Tertullian (c. 160–c. 220 C.E.);
7. Hippolytus of Rome (170–235 / 236 C.E.);
8. Africanus (c. 160–c. 240 C.E.);
9. Origen (184 / 185–253 / 254 C.E.);
10. Cyprian (d. 258 C.E.);
11. *Marcus Minucius Felix* (fl. c. 150?–c. 270? C.E.);
12. Methodius of Olympus (d. c. 311 C.E.);
13. *Lucius Caecilius Firmianus Lactantius* (c. 240–c. 320 C.E.);
14. Arnobius of Sicca (d. c. 330 C.E.); and

15. Pseudo-Justin (fl. fourth century C.E.).

This is an especially pertinent question, given the fact that an apologist of the calibre of Origen wrote well over 165,000 words challenging Celsus' critical anti-Christian views. This on-going debate, which lasted at least three decades, necessitated Origen having to justify, inter alia, his claim that the Christian dogma, far from being some religious myth was an historical fact. In this regard, he relies heavily on Josephus but strangely makes no reference[170] to what has now become known as the *TF*.

Indeed, many illustrative examples exist that highlight where Origen should have found the *TF* most useful in his rebuttal of Celsus' claims, yet for some reason, he never bothered to do so. To highlight but two of these occasions: Origen (*Cels.* I, 6)[171] states:

> After this, through the influence of some motive which is unknown to me, Celsus asserts that it is by the names of certain demons, and by the use of incantations, that the Christians appear to be possessed of (miraculous) power; hinting, I suppose, at the practices of those who expel evil spirits by incantations. And here he manifestly appears to malign the Gospel. For it is not by incantations that Christians seem to prevail (over evil spirits), but by the name of Jesus, accompanied by the announcement of the narratives which relate to Him; for the repetition of these has frequently been the means of driving demons out of men, especially when those who repeated them did so in a sound and genuinely believing spirit. Such power, indeed, does the name of Jesus possess over evil spirits, that there have been instances where it was effectual, when it was pronounced even by bad men, which Jesus Himself taught (would be the case), when He said: Many shall

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[170] Many instructive examples exist that highlight where Origen should have found the *TF* most useful in his rebuttal of Celsus' claims, yet for some reason never bothered to do so. To highlight but two of these occasions: Origen (*Cels* [*Contra Celsum*]), I, 6) states: "'Many shall say to Me in that day, In Thy name we have cast out devils, and done many wonderful works.' Whether Celsus omitted this from intentional malignity, or from ignorance, I do not know …". Again, Origen (*Cels*, I, 67) quotes Celsus' assertion that Jesus was not capable of performing wonderful works: "The old mythological fables, which attributed a divine origin to Perseus, and Amphion, and Aeacus, and Minos, were not believed by us [i.e. Celsus and his followers]. Nevertheless, that they might not appear unworthy of credit, they represented the deeds of these personages as great and wonderful, and truly beyond the power of man; but what hast thou [i.e. Jesus of Nazareth] done that is noble or wonderful either in deed or in word?" [My insertions].

[171] English translation according to Crombie (Tr.). 1885. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. IV. in *New Advent* [Online]. Available: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04161.htm [20 July 2014].

> say to Me in that day, In Your name we have cast out devils, and done many wonderful works. Whether Celsus omitted this from intentional malignity, or from ignorance, I do not know. **And he next proceeds to bring a charge against the Saviour Himself, alleging that it was by means of sorcery that He was able to accomplish the wonders which He performed**; and that foreseeing that others would attain the same knowledge, and do the same things, making a boast of doing them by help of the power of God, He excludes such from His kingdom. And his accusation is, that if they are justly excluded, while He Himself is guilty of the same practices, He is a wicked man; but if He is not guilty of wickedness in doing such things, neither are they who do the same as He. But even if it be impossible to show by what power Jesus wrought these miracles, it is clear that Christians employ no spells or incantations, but the simple name of Jesus, and certain other words in which they repose faith, according to the holy Scriptures [my emphasis].

Again, Origen (*Cels.* I, 67)[172] quotes Celsus' assertion that Jesus was not capable of performing wonderful works:

> After the above, this Jew of Celsus, as if he were a Greek who loved learning, and were well instructed in Greek literature, continues: "The old mythological fables, which attributed a divine origin to Perseus, and Amphion, and Æacus, and Minos, were not believed by us. Nevertheless, that they might not appear unworthy of credit, they represented the deeds of these personages as great and wonderful, and truly beyond the power of man; but what have you [i.e. Jesus of Nazareth] done that is noble or wonderful either in deed or in word?"

More critical scholars repeatedly point out that, had the *TF* existed, in any guise, by say the early third century C.E., it would surely have been Origen's *only* verifiable historical proof (outside the *NT*), that Jesus had truly existed. Furthermore, it would have assisted him in proving that Jesus did not resort to sorcery to perform his "wonderful works". Instead, he conventionally portrays Josephus as someone who *did not believe* that Jesus was the "Christ". This assumes that Josephus even knew what a "Christ" was. This information contradicts the present form of the *TF* and possibly even the *James Passage*. Certainly if the *TF* is in any way authentic, it very clearly shows that Josephus considered Jesus to be the "Christ". In addition, it would indicate that Josephus knew what it meant to be called the "Christ".

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[172] English translation according to Crombie (Tr.). 1885. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. IV. in *New Advent* [Online]. Available: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04161.htm [20 July 2014].

It is enlightening, at this point, to consider Origen's own words. For example, in c. 246–248 C.E., Origen wrote in his *COM,* X, 17 / 5268–5269[173]:

> And to so great a reputation among the people for righteousness did this James rise, that Flavius Josephus, who wrote the "Antiquities of the Jews" in twenty books, when wishing to exhibit the cause why the people suffered so great misfortunes that even the temple was razed to the ground, said, that these things happened to them in accordance with the wrath of God in consequence of the things which they had dared to do against James the brother of Jesus who is called Christ. And the wonderful thing is, that, though he did not accept Jesus as Christ, he yet gave testimony that the righteousness of James was so great; and he says that the people thought that they had suffered these things because of James.

Again, Origen (*Cels.* I, 47)[174], confirms his stance:

> Now this writer [i.e. Josephus], **although not believing in Jesus as the Christ**, in seeking after the cause of the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple, whereas he ought to have said that the conspiracy against Jesus was the cause of these calamities befalling the people, since they put to death Christ, who was a prophet, … [my emphasis].

It is quite clear, had the *TF* existed in Origen's version of the *Antiquities*, where Josephus plainly calls Jesus "the Christ", Origen could not easily have made these two statements. What is also telling (an issue that will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter Four), is that Origen seems to have had the same version of the *JP* (i.e. *Ant.* 20, 9, 1 / 201) that we read today. He even quotes almost the same strange formulation, viz.: "James the brother of Jesus who is called Christ" and not say "James the son of Joseph" which is the proper form of address. If so, a later Church Father, like Eusebius, could not possibly have forged this specific passage (i.e. *JP*).

Here the arch-critic, Doherty (2009: 38), puts forward the argument that, as most of these writers were primarily concerned with defending the new Christian faith from non-Christian criticism, they would have benefited greatly from quoting the *TF*, regardless of the claimed "authentic" and

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[173] English translation according to Patrick (Tr.) 1896. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. IX, in *New Advent* [Online]. Available: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/101610.htm [20 July 2014].

[174] English translation according to Crombie (Tr.). 1885. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. IV. in *New Advent* [Online]. Available: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04161.htm [20 July 2014].

"neutral" form it might have taken originally.

One particularly noteworthy example (cf. Jackson and Gilmore, 1910: 271) that needs to be highlighted here concerns Origen's *Cels.* written in c. 248 C.E. In it, Origen (cf. Chadwick, 1980: xxviii) informs his reader that Celsus the Platonist opposed Christianity in his book entitled *True Word* (c. 177 C.E.).

Unfortunately we do not have Celsus the Platonist's actual arguments, but from Origen's responses it is possible to re-establish at least some of the key issues of dispute. In this regard, as we have witnessed already, Origen, in his attempts to counter Celsus' criticism of Christianity, makes use of, inter alia, the works of Josephus.

With this point in mind, Doherty (2009: 538–539) believes that Origen must have been particularly intimate with *Antiquities* because he made as many as eleven references to Josephus. As an example, and has already been mentioned, in his *Cels*. I, 47 Origen refers specifically to *Ant.* 18, 5, 2 / 116–119 to recapitulate what Josephus had to say about John the Baptist. Doherty also reminds his reader that despite this assumed familiarity with the text, for reasons unknown, nowhere in his enormous oeuvre does Origen bother to refer to the *TF* (i.e. *Ant.* 18, 3, 3 / 63–64).

Indeed, Origen seems to be totally ignorant of the latter's existence, or did not feel that it was in any way useful for countering the allegations of Celsus. Taken together with all the other supporting evidence, it is well-nigh impossible to prove that the *TF* (whatever its hypothetical form) must have existed before the fourth century C.E.

It is for this very reason that scholars like Doherty, Mason and R.M. Price believe that the *TF*, in whatever form one would like to imagine it, simply did not exist in Origen's day. If it had, Origen (and certainly many others) would surely have eagerly pointed the Christian critic to the recorded words of Josephus as an independent and neutral witness.

Based on this kind of reasoning, the allegation is commonly made that the *TF* is an obvious forgery, possibly added to the *Antiquities* sometime in the fourth century C.E. In support of this viewpoint it is often implied, if not openly stated, that Origen's version of *Antiquities* (which is referenced in his *Cels*), could not have contained the *TF*. Scholars such as R.M. Price (2003: 38), repeat the oft-quoted fact that the *TF* does not appear in the edition of *Antiquities* as read by Origen. In addition, R.M. Price (2003: 38–39), believes that Irenaeus' passage on the gospel origins may have first

originated with Eusebius and then been interpolated subsequently into Irenaeus' *Haer.* (c. 180 C.E.).

Yet Origen still made extensive use of Josephus. In his *Cels.* (I / 47 and II / 13) Origen claims that Josephus blamed the destruction of Jerusalem on the death of James, when he should have said the death of Jesus (see Table 5) below.

This is not true. Josephus explains in *Ant.* 20, 8, 5 / 160–166, that God punished the Jews by destroying Jerusalem, mainly because of the increasing lawlessness of the people. Josephus points to the increased number of undesirables (robbers and zealots) in the city. He refers to the constant disrespect shown to the Temple and its sanctuaries by these criminals, including, inter alia, their assassination of the High Priest Jonathan. He sums up his reasoning thus:

> And this seems to me to have been the reason why God, out of his hatred of these men's wickedness, rejected our city; and as for the temple, he no longer esteemed it sufficiently pure for him to inhabit therein, but brought the Romans upon us, and threw a fire upon the city to purge it; and brought upon us, our wives, and children, slavery, as desirous to make us wiser by our calamities.

Date (C.E.)	Author	Reason Given For Destruction of Temple/Jerusalem	Claimed Reference	Status
c. 97	Josephus	Rise of zealotry - Death of the High Priest Jonathan	Personal Knowledge	True
c. 248	Origen	Death of James the Just	Josephus	False
c. 326	Eusebius	Death of James the Just	Josephus	False
c. 392	Jerome	Murder of James the apostle	Josephus	False
c. 400	Chrysostom	Death of John the Baptist	Josephus	False

Table 5
A Survey of False References to Josephus Concerning
Reasons for the Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

As an aside, it should also be seen as significant that even Christian commentators who lived quite some time after Eusebius also seem to make no mention of the *TF*. Such authorities as Zindler (2003: 45–48) confirm that St. John Chrysostom, who wrote late in the fourth century C.E., was also obviously quite familiar with the works of Josephus. In this regard, he made use of them in his many homilies. Regardless, he never mentions anything that could be ascribed to the *TF* or one of its claimed variants.

By way of proving Chrysostom's knowledge of Josephus, Zindler (2003: 45–48) draws his reader's attention to some pertinent examples, viz:

1. In Homily 76, Chrysostom proffers that Jerusalem was ultimately devastated as divine punishment for the death of Jesus. In order to justify the enormous scale of the destruction to the city as fitting and just compensation for the crucifixion of his deity he refers to Josephus' account of the horror.

2. Chrysostom, like Origen before him, also makes it clear that Josephus *was not* a Christian.

However what Chrysostom also does (which will be dealt with in more detail later) is to fabricate, in Homily 13, that Josephus had accredited the destructive war to the murder of John the Baptist. Of course Josephus did no such thing. Furthermore, Chrysostom also contradicts both Origen and Eusebius who both claimed that Josephus blamed the destruction of Jerusalem on the death of James the brother of Jesus. As has already been pointed out, Josephus actually implies in his *War* that the destruction of the war was due to the zealot's murder of the former High Priest Jonathan.

Chrysostom makes no mention of the *TF* (which surely would have proven most useful for his many homilies), but still finds the need to fabricate Josephan-backed claims elsewhere. This would seem to support firmly the hypothesis that Chrysostom's version of the *Antiquities* (like the one possessed by Origen), *did not* contain the *TF*.

Mason (2003: 57) also observes that in the period following Eusebius there were five fathers of the church (including Augustine) who regularly cited from Josephus but strangely, never the *TF*.

Here, the collective wisdom is that as Augustine lived and worked in North Africa, whereas both Eusebius and Jerome operated in the Levant, versions of the *Antiquities* that contained the *TF* did not appear in the west until at least the fifth century C.E. onwards. It should also be seen as significant that

as late as the ninth century (cf. Zindler, 2003: 48–50), Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople[175], possessed a copy of the *Antiquities* sans *TF*. Zindler makes it clear that given Photius was most concerned with recording the history of nascent Christianity, his silence on the *TF* is highly significant.

Furthermore, had the *TF* been both extant and critical in nature (as claimed by Chilton and Evans [1998: 470–471] and Barnett [2009: 50]), Photius would not have held back if mention had been made of a false Jewish messiah. In addition, Zindler (2003: 48–50), takes note that Photius quotes marginal inscriptions on a few occasions. This demonstrates the relative ease that foreign material could eventually be worked into a manuscript and subsequently be considered to be "original" material.

This conclusion is strengthened by the additional fact that Photius even discusses the *Baptist Passage* found in the same book (i.e. Book 18 of the *Antiquities*) that is also home to the *TF* (when it is included in the *Antiquities*).

Conventional wisdom would seem to favour that the very reason why it was necessary for an early Christian scribe or apologist to create something like the *TF* was because of the need for some extra-biblical historical context to support the emerging belief structure. The very real suspicion is that these authors suddenly discovered that such information was sorely lacking.

The solution, within this scenario, would surely be to manufacture it. Unbelievably, a typical conservative scholar will tend to argue the very opposite, claiming that no-one would have seriously questioned the existence of Jesus in the first centuries of the nascent Christian Church, and thus they would never have had any real reason to quote something like the *TF* if in fact it already existed. This convenient notion is supported by scholars such as Lowder (2000).

Jerome

Finally, it would behove us to look at a very late fourth century Christian apologist who did make use of the *TF*. In this respect, Jerome's comments are most useful. In his *DVI* (*De Viris Illustribus*) 13[176] Jerome (c. 392–393

[175] Photius I, Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople (858 to 867 C.E. and 877 to 886 C.E.).
[176] English translation according to Richardson (Tr.). 1892. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2nd Series, Vol. III, in *New Advent.org* [Online]. Available:

C.E.) writes:

> Josephus, the son of Matthias, priest of Jerusalem, taken prisoner by Vespasian and his son Titus, was banished. Coming to Rome he presented to the emperors, father and son, seven books On the captivity of the Jews, which were deposited in the public library and, on account of his genius, was found worthy of a statue at Rome…In the eighteenth* book of his Antiquities he most openly acknowledges that **Christ was slain by the Pharisees on account of the greatness of his miracles**, that John the Baptist was truly a prophet, and that Jerusalem was destroyed because of the murder of James the apostle [my emphasis].

Jerome then gives his slightly altered version of the *TF* (*DVI*, 13)[177] which translated into English reads as follows:

> In this same time was Jesus, a wise man, if indeed it be lawful to call him man. For he was a worker of wonderful miracles, and a teacher of those who freely receive the truth. He had very many adherents also, both of the Jews and of the Gentiles, and was believed to be Christ, and when through the envy of our chief men Pilate had crucified him, nevertheless those who had loved him at first continued to the end, for he appeared to them the third day alive. Many things, both these and other wonderful things are in the songs of the prophets who prophesied concerning him and the sect of Christians, so named from Him, exists to the present day.

Below (Figure 3) is a comparison between Jerome's version of the *TF* and the original Greek text.

Words from the *Antiquities* that do not appear in Jerome's *DVI* are **emboldened.** Additions to Jerome's text are underscored. Slight alterations of punctuation or spelling are **emboldened** and underscored.

Firstly, Jerome specifies the nature of the vague Jewish leadership mentioned in Eusebius' version of the *TF*. Here Jerome does two interrelated things, viz.: he emphasises the guilt of the Jews concerned–thus making it even less likely for Josephus to have written the account.

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http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2708.htm [24 July 2014].

[177] English translation according to Richardson (Tr.). 1892. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2nd Series, Vol. III in *New Advent.org* [Online]. Available: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2708.htm [24 July 2014].

Josephus *Antiquities* 18, 3, 3 / 63–64	**Jerome DVI, 13[178]**
Kai auton endeixei tôn prôtôn andrôn par' hêmin staurôi epitetimêkotos Pilatou ouk epausanto hoi to prôton agapêsantes: ephanê gar autois tritên echôn hêmeran palin zôn tôn theiôn prophêtôn tauta ***te*** *kai alla muria peri autou* ***thaumasia*** *eirêkotôn. Eis* ***eti*** *te nun tôn Christianôn apo toude ônomasmenon ouk* ***epelipe*** *to phûlon.*	*Kai auton endeixei tôn prôtôn andrôn par' hêmin staurôi epitetimêkotos Pilatou ouk epausanto hoi to prôton* ***auton*** *agapêsantes: ephanê gar autois tritên echôn hêmeran palin zôn tôn theiôn prophêtôn tauta te kai alla muria peri autou eirêkotôn. Eis te nun tôn Christianôn apo toude* ***ônomasmenôn*** *ouk* ***elipe*** *to phûlon.*

Figure 3
A Comparison between *Antiquities* and *DVI* Versions of the *TF*.

Secondly Jerome specifies that it was jealous Pharisees who were responsible for delivering Jesus to Pilate. Eusebius' copy of the *TF* made no such distinction and Jerome is clearly embellishing. As an aside, as confirmed by Bilde, (1988: 189) with reference to Rajak (1983: 11–45), most scholars, especially from the latter half of the twentieth century, seem to favour the notion that Josephus was a practicing Pharisee. If so, Jerome was mistaken and it would be very unlikely that the *TF* was a genuine Josephan utterance.

Of course some evidence also exists, based on but a cursory reading of his works that Josephus, may only have ultimately become a Pharisee (Allen, 2016a: 261–305). However, equally, he was obviously not always that enthused by the activities of certain of the Pharisees, so it is quite open as regards which Jewish sect he consistently favoured. By way of but one example, in *Ant.* 17, 2, 4 / 41[179] Josephus states:

> For there was a certain sect of men that were Jews, who valued themselves highly upon the exact skill they had in the law of their fathers, and made men believe they were highly favoured by God, by whom this set of women

[178] Transliterated Greek based on Richardson (Tr.). 1892. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2nd Series, Vol. III in *New Advent.org* [Online]. Available: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2708.htm [24 July 2014].

[179] English translation according to Whiston (Tr.) 1895. *Flavius Josephus. The Works of Flavius Josephus,* in *Perseus Digital Library* [Online]. Available: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0146%3Abook%3D17%3Awhiston+chapter%3D2%3Awhiston+section%3D4 [21 July 2014].

> were inveigled. These are those that are called the sect of the Pharisees, who were in a capacity of greatly opposing kings. A cunning sect they were, and soon elevated to a pitch of open fighting and doing mischief.

Regardless, Josephus, who was born a Sadducee, was a religious, practicing Jew, who was obviously very critical of anyone who did not share his particular sense of morality.

Furthermore, it is quite apparent that Eusebius' copy(ies) of the *Antiquities* complete with his version of the *TF* (most likely composed whilst he was in Caesarea) had easily reached Bethlehem (home to Jerome) by the end of the fourth century C.E. and further, Jerome felt no compunction in liberally embroidering the *TF*, giving it a distinctly anti-Semitic tone. This, then, has to be seen as an additional interpolation by a known Christian apologist and suggests that this was acceptable practice at the time.

Certainly, Jerome was quite capable of blatant exaggeration. Possibly, one of the most overt examples of his "pious frauds" can be witnessed with this statement he makes in c. 386 C.E. he writes from Bethlehem in the names of *Paula* and *Eustochium*, to *Marcella* (i.e. *Jer.Ep.* XLVI, 4.)[180]:

> Josephus, himself a Jewish writer, asserts that at the Lord's crucifixion there broke from the temple voices of heavenly powers, saying: "Let us depart hence"

This flagrant mistruth aside, Jerome also seems to condone a more "pragmatic" approach to conversion when in his *Jer.Ep*. XLIX (XLVIII), 13[181] which was written to one *Pammachus*, he states:

> We see passages taken captive by your pen and pressed into service to win you a victory which in the volumes from which they are taken have no controversial bearing at all. May he not reply to us in the words of the Saviour: "I have one mode of speech for those that are without and another for those that are within; the crowds hear my parables, but their interpretation is for my disciples alone"? [Matt 13: 10-17] The Lord puts questions to the Pharisees, but does not elucidate them. To teach a disciple

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[180] English translation according to Fremantle *et al.* (Trs). 1893. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2nd Series, Vol. VI, in *New Advent.org.* [Online]. Available: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3001046.htm [10 August 2014].

[181] English translation according to Fremantle *et al.* (Trs). 1893. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2nd Series, Vol. VI, in *New Advent.org.* [Online]Available: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3001048.htm [10 August 2014].

> is one thing; to vanquish an opponent, another. "My mystery is for me," says the prophet; "my mystery is for me and for them that are mine."

However, Jerome continues in *Jer.Ep*. XLIX (XLVIII), 14[182] and confirms that he will not force a non-believer to embrace the truth:

> I had no right to disregard his [a doctrinal opponent called Jovinian] struggles and to drag him against his will into the bonds of truth! I might use such language had the desire of victory induced me to say anything counter to the rule laid down in Scripture, and had I taken the line–so often adopted by strong men in controversy–of justifying the means by the result.[183]

Thus we have an interesting situation, one where, based on Jerome's supposed baring of his soul in *Jer.Ep*. XLIX (XLVIII), 13–14, makes it highly unlikely that he would knowingly debase a source–certainly a scriptural one–to win an argument. However, based on his fabrication in *Jer.Ep.* XLVI, 4, and his *DVI*, 2 where he patently fabricates Josephus' reasons for the destruction of Jerusalem (cf. Table 5) he demonstrates that on occasion he has no such scruples.

Issues related to literary progression

As is commonly pointed out by more sceptical scholars such as Doherty (2009: 535–536), Mason (2003: 226–227), and Wells (1989: 22)[184] etc. there appears to be a lack of continuity or progression with what is assumed to be Josephus' authentic encapsulating passages when either the *TF* or the

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[182] English translation according to Fremantle *et al.* (Trs). 1893. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2nd Series, Vol. VI, in *New Advent.org.* [Online]Available: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3001048.htm [10 August 2014].

[183] It is important to note that in c. 384 C.E. Jerome comments on the very issue of fraudulent behaviour in his *Jer.Ep.* XXVII, 1–3. to *Marcella*. Here, Jerome defends himself against an accusation that he had distorted a scriptural text. Jerome explains that he merely modified the Latin text so that it would better reflect the original Greek. Cf. Migne. 1877. *Patrologiae: Cursus Completus, Series Latina, Tomus* XXII: *S. Eusebius Hieronymus:* 431–432.

[184] Wells explains that the "Jesus passage occurs in a context which deals exclusively with the misfortunes of the Jews (only some of which are attributed to Pilate) and that Jesus' condemnation by Pilate at the behest of the Jewish leadership has no connection with such misfortunes except from the standpoint of a Christian, who would naturally regard this crime as the greatest misfortune ever to have befallen the Jews." Wells, 1989: 22.

BP (i.e. *Ant.* 18, 5, 2 / 116–119) are concerned.

Thus we have an obvious break (i.e. the *TF* itself) in the larger narrative found in Book 18 of the *Antiquities*, which logically, can only be either deliberate or entirely fraudulent. Certainly, if this violation into the main text, complete with stylistic anomalies, was in any way deliberately intended by Josephus, it shows him up as being a very sloppy writer. However, conversely, if it is yet another indicator of interpolation, it clearly shows various degrees of both naiveté and even arrogance on the part of the forger(s) responsible. Certainly, it would appear that these anomalies have only managed to be largely overlooked by the general reader up until quite recently due to the power of the accepted constructed worldview wherein Christianity was the sole apotheosis of all that is true and real.

The issues under discussion in the dominant text before the commencement of the *TF* first concerns Pontius Pilate's attempt to introduce effigies of the Roman Emperor[185] into Jerusalem, as well as the ensuing Jewish insurrection culminating with Pilate's countermand to have the images removed and sent back to Caesarea. Then an account is given of how Pilate undertook to supply water to Jerusalem (albeit funded with monies taken from the Temple treasury); the subsequent Jewish revolt and the manner in which Pilate's soldiers inflicted many injuries and casualties against the seditious masses and the eventual curtailment of hostilities.

This narrative is immediately followed, with no explanation, by the *TF*. The opening words of the text (i.e. *Ant.* 18, 3, 4 / 65)[186] immediately following the *TF* are as follows:

> About the same time also another sad calamity put the Jews into disorder, and certain shameful practices happened about the temple of Isis that was at Rome.

These words in line 65 introduce a long passage that details a series of calamitous events that result in the destruction of the temple of Isis and the crucifixion of certain Isiac priests.

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[185] i.e. *Gaius Iulius Caesar Augustus Germanicus* a.k.a. *Caligula* (12–41 C.E.).

[186] English translation according to Whiston (Tr.) 1895. *Flavius Josephus. The Works of Flavius Josephus,* in *Perseus Digital Library* [Online]. Available: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0146%3Abook%3D18%3Awhiston+chapter%3D3%3Awhiston+section%3D4 [11 August 2014].

Assuming for the moment that the *TF* is an outright forgery then, originally, Josephus must have first described the great misfortunes visited by the Romans upon the Jews in Jerusalem (*Ant.* 18, 3, 1 / 55–2 / 62). He then moved directly to an equally tumultuous act of Roman oppression directed at the followers of Isis (albeit in Rome) (*Ant.* 18, 3, 4 / 65–80). Certainly, if the suspected interpolation is removed, there seems to be a greater sense of continuity and logic behind the delivery of the two interrelated accounts.

However, if the *TF* is not an interpolation, then its presence disturbs the flow of what must be assumed to be the dominant narrative (i.e. the tribulation of the Jews under oppressive Roman rule). For example, consider the scenario of a hypothetical, non-Christian reader living at a time contemporary to Josephus. Such a person would have had no inkling of the enormous import that the topic of Jesus the Christ would have in the future. Such an individual, having just read: "as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day" would have been quite confused to then read "About this time also another sad calamity put the Jews into disorder…"

Thus, it should be obvious to any critical scholars worth their salt, that if the *TF* is in any way Josephan, his inclusion of this passage (i.e. the *TF*) at the specific position it now occupies, clearly breaks the logical flow of the main narrative. Although in his various writings, Josephus' themes are on occasion, not flawlessly organised[187] there is generally, a recognisable logic to the order of events that he narrates so why would he have placed the *TF* in such an obviously arbitrary position?

The assumption is thus made that the *TF* is more likely to be an interpolation than a genuine Josephan passage.

One way of obtaining greater clarity before leaping to any obvious conclusions, is to determine if similar illogical textual interludes (albeit with no Christian import) exist elsewhere in any of Josephus' extant writings.

If they do exist, it would provide valuable evidence that confirms that on occasion:

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[187] Cohen has explored numerous examples of Josephus' sloppiness, inconsistent introduction of characters in his narrative etc. but in the specific context of *War*. In this regard, nowhere does Cohen report the same type of discord regarding literary progression as displayed in the case of the *TF* in *Antiquities*. Cf. Cohen. 2002.

Josephus was quite proficient at writing disconnected passages; and was perfectly capable of producing something akin to the *TF* as it now stands.

As an aside, even if originally, the *TF was not part* of the narrative, Josephus' jump from Jewish affairs in Jerusalem to events involving the cult of Isis in Rome may initially seem equally out of context until one also realises that:

1. Josephus warns his reader that he will be digressing. He clearly states: "I now return to the relation of what happened about this time to the Jews at Rome, as I formerly told you I would." (*Ant.* 18, 3, 4 / 80); and

2. Josephus uses the cult of Isis event (which took place in Rome) as a literary bridge to ultimately deal with negative Jewish concerns (i.e. the banishment Jews), that also took place in Rome (*Ant.* 18, 3, 5 / 81–84).

Thus, although possibly clumsily executed, there does exist a valid reason, given by Josephus himself, behind the specific placement of the two accounts of Roman oppression in Jerusalem and Rome respectively. If so, then the possibility that the *TF* may be genuine makes even less sense, since Josephus at no point explains why he inserts the *TF* at the very point he has explained that he will be digressing for other reasons. This in itself should be seen as highly significant.

Certainly, both Zindler and Mason have taken up this point in their work. On this issue, the highly sceptical Zindler (2003: 42–43) notes that Josephus is quite clear when he wants to make a digression yet in the case of the *TF* he remains strangely silent.

Zindler (2003: 42–43), confirms that whereas Josephus is very careful to warn his reader of the digression from a Jewish event in Jerusalem, to a sexual scandal involving Isiac cultists in Rome, at no time does Josephus explain his supposed digression concerning a certain Jesus appearing well and alive again on the third day following his crucifixion and death. Doherty (2009: 535) also confirms that Jesus' crucifixion is not represented in any way as a "calamity" for the Jews.

Mason (2003: 225–227) also concurs with this position and explains that with the glaring exception of the *TF*, all the other surrounding passages are presented as moral criticisms of often violent anti-Jewish behaviour by the Romans. In sharp contradistinction, the *TF* itself, neither moralises,

preaches or criticises. Rather, it praises both Jesus as well as his adherents. Mason (2003: 227) clarifies that the supporting text refers directly to upheavals. However, he confirms that the import of the *TF* is wholly sympathetic to both Jesus and his devotees. Most significantly, Mason (2003: 227), points out that this episode, unlike the adjoining passages, "has no moral, no lesson." Indeed, most unexpectedly, and as confirmed by, inter alia, Mason himself, the passage does not even reprove or mildly sanction Pontius Pilate's obviously excessive actions.

On this point, Mason (2003: 225–227) looks closely at the terminology that Josephus employs and draws our attention to the fact that the various events contained in the text surrounding the *TF* are all specifically described as "outrages", "uprisings" or "tumults" but no such description is applicable to the *TF*. Mason (2003: 227) goes on to verify that logically, the reader might well expect some censure of either the Roman and/or Jewish leadership. Instead the passage only mentions that Jesus was possibly betrayed by the "leading men among us."

To counter this finding, and as confirmed by, inter alia, Olson, (2013a: 99) conservative scholars such as Bardet (2002) and Whealey (2009: 73–116) have both put forward the possibility that originally Josephus might have said something about Jesus but that it had been somewhat negative in its original formulation and more in accord with his Jewish calamity theme, within which it is now encapsulated.

The facts are that as the *TF* has come down to us, the only negative aspect of it concerns the possibly inferred criticism of the Jewish leadership who condemned Jesus to death. Certainly, as will be discussed in more detail later, it is hardly likely that Josephus as a Jewish leader himself, would have held such (conceivably), anti-Semitic views.

According to this hypothetical scenario (i.e. originally the *TF* was quite negative in tone), the more conservative scholars postulate that a later Christian scribe, not at all intent on deceit, had only to give the original text a more positive spin. Doherty (2009: 565–568) for one, finds this possibility somewhat too speculative for comfort. As evidence he cites the Arabic and Slavonic[188] versions of the *TF* which each serve as variants on the same issues mentioned in the Greek version. Here, there is absolutely no evidence of any negative terminology or calamitous language.

[188] Cf. Whealey, 2008: *The Testimonium Flavianum in Syriac and Arabic*: 573–590.

As is well known, ancient writers did not make use of things such as footnotes for reference purposes. This point is confirmed by the conservative scholar M. Grant (1995: 53). In this sense, if they wanted to expand on an issue or perhaps make a small digression, they normally inserted that information into the main text whilst copying by hand. Sometimes they made a comment in the margins when greater clarity was indicated and/or it was discovered that a piece of text had been inadvertently left out during a previous replicating process. This fact might be seen as useful ammunition for more conservative scholars who believe the *TF* to be partially or totally authentic.

However, some conservative scholars go even further and go so far as to claim that such "digressions" such as the *TF* are also wholly characteristic of Josephus' writing style. For example, Smallwood in Williamson (1981: 20–21) makes this false claim. This point of view is quite ingenious, because in point of fact, except in the specific cases of the *TF* and the *BP* (which is why they are suspected interpolations) Josephus *does not* characteristically make such drastic digressions. Accordingly, this raises the obvious suspicion that Smallwood, desperate to prove the historicity of Jesus, is presenting a weak apologetic purely to give a sense of validity to such obvious interruptions as the *TF* and *BP*.

The characteristics of the *TF* as regards length and positivity

As has already been highlighted, when antagonists of an historical Jesus consider the *TF* they are quick to point out the obvious coincidence that, despite the shortness of its length (a mere 89 words in the Greek version), this paragraph manages to spell out quite succinctly and confidently all the salient tenets of the Christian dogma as more normally espoused far later than the first century C.E..

Undeniably, this conspicuously concise and precocious text, which seems to draw its inspiration solely from the canonical gospels, strongly suggests that Jesus should not be regarded as a mere human and goes even further, intimating that he has a status higher than that of even a "wise man" and refers to Jesus as "*Ho Christos*" ("the anointed"). The only other comparable document from this period that also claims to be the source for the first use of a similar accolade "follower of Christ" is Acts which, depending on the authority, has been variously dated to anywhere between 60–150 C.E..

No doubt, because of the dominant worldview upheld by the more typical

Christian scholar, Origen's failure to employ the *TF* creates an obvious problem that needs a creative solution to explain away. As a result, more conservative scholars will attempt to do one of two things at this juncture:

- Argue the complete opposite and demonstrate that the very *brevity* of the *TF* points to it being an authentic Josephan comment; or

- Argue that originally it was *far longer* and/or more neutral if not extremely negative in character.

Here a typical argument would claim that an early Christian apologist:

1. would not have been satisfied with such an understated reference;

2. would have used the interpolation as an opportunity to give fraudulent, extra-biblical support to Jesus being an actual, celebrated, flesh-and-blood personage; and

3. would have elaborated that Jesus was a deity.

Therefore, the *TF* must be authentic since it is so short.

For example, the well-respected Christian authority, Meier, holds to this view and thus naively argues (1991: 79), that the *TF* must have existed in Origen's time. Moreover, it did not quite appear as it does today and further, its original form must have been overtly negative in nature! Hence the early Christian Fathers would have had to have contended with the realisation that Josephus was a non-Christian. In addition, it would have negatively emphasised that Josephus neither accepted Jesus' divinity nor believed that he had risen from the dead.

As already noted, Doherty, for one, finds this argument questionable. Doherty (2009: 539) comments on Meier's thesis that the hypothetical, original negative wording of the *TF* reflected Josephus' non-Christian stance and was accordingly circumvented by the early Christian apologists. He does not believe that early Christians would have found an earlier form of the *TF* negative or upsetting. For example, Justin's *Dialogue with the Jew Trypho*, dealt head on with negative views of a non-Christian. Furthermore, Origen happily criticised Josephus for accrediting the fall of Jerusalem to God's chastisement of the Jews for the death of James, rather than for the death of Jesus. In addition, Origen clearly tells his reader that Josephus did not accept Jesus as the Christ. This contradicts the *TF* as it now stands. The

last point made by Doherty seems to be the most convincing since, even if one accepted the slim possibility that the *TF did exist* in Origen's day, not *all* of the early Christian apologists active at this time would have automatically rejected it. This is especially true if one considers that this would have appeared as an expedient, substantiated, non-partisan, extra-biblical/scriptural proof for the existence of Jesus and his avowed ministry. In this latter regard, Meier's argument makes little sense and reads as some feeble and irresolute attempt to deny what is really quite self-evident to anyone who is more objective and critically minded.

To bolster this implausible argument, a number of more contemporary Christian scholars have variously attempted to recreate what they imagine the original negative format of the *TF* must have looked like. In this regard, seemingly swayed by their constructed realities, they deliberately manufacture more hostile and negative versions of what they need the *TF* to have been originally, and/or attempt to justify translations of key phrases within the *TF* as being far more deleterious than is normally granted by a neutral reader.

As an example, consider but one sentence from the *TF*, couched in overtly negative undertones as supplied by the conservative scholar, Stanton (1994: 169–171): "Jesus was a doer of strange deeds, and a deluder of the simple-minded. He led astray many Jews and Greeks."

From a more sceptical point of view this response makes absolutely no sense at all. Certainly, if argued from the constructed reality of a typically more liberal scholar like Doherty, Mason or Wells, it is the very *shortness* of length, coupled with its *compactness* of dogmatic material that gives the *TF* away as being quite fraudulent.

Arguing from a neutral position, why would a forger, making use of what he perceived to be an opportune place in the genuine Josephan text to insert a carefully worded reference to bolster his personal belief system want to overplay his hand by writing a long and obvious prevarication? Again, if (at the time), copying the style of Josephus was really subject to critical scrutiny (which is doubtful), why would an early Christian apologist want to increase the risk of detection and possible ridicule by supplying a very lengthy passage that would surely exponentially increase the dangers of detection?

In addition, more sceptical scholars will quickly point out that if Josephus wrote this passage it is uncharacteristically lacking in details that unquestionably abound in the supporting text.

On this very point, Doherty (2009: 537) confirms that the very brevity of the *TF* is surely evidence of its fraudulent nature. It is totally lacking in specificity when compared to the surrounding narratives which are resplendent with exhaustive detail. For example, the passages that immediately precede and succeed the *TF* are more thorough. Indeed, the "two scandals" that clearly occurred at "about the same time" in history, and which encapsulate the *TF,* contain an abundance of rich detail. They contain comprehensive descriptions and explanations of historical events. Thus, there are at least two reasons why the more liberal and sceptical camp do not accept that originally the *TF* was more negative:

Firstly, in terms of the claim that the *TF* was originally quite negative, Josephus would have had to have made (possibly quite lengthy), comments that were distinctly anti-Jesus in nature. Yet, the shorter text that now exists, is highly positive, and clearly retains extraordinarily superlative claims about Jesus. These include such features as, he was *not a man*, that he was *prophesied in scripture*, crucified on a cross and even *rose from the dead* etc.

Secondly the claimed, hostile version of the *TF,* with its avowed negative comments about Jesus, would surely have attracted the attention of any number of commentators in the first four centuries of the Common Era. Instead there is absolute silence on the matter until the time of Eusebius' recorded interactions (i.e. fourth century C.E.).

What is quite remarkable at this juncture is that the more conservative scholars such as Meier, Eddy and Boyd (due to their acknowledgment of partial interpolation), are all quite prepared to admit to what can only be described as shameful interventions into the Josephan text by Christian hands in the first centuries of the Common Era. However, this admission is only undertaken in order to save the *TF* in *any* form that will still serve today as a useful, independent, extra-biblical/scriptural account of Jesus.

Stylistic idiosyncrasies for authorship attribution

Another methodology that might prove useful is to turn things around and instead of looking for original, negative "Josephan fingerprints", to rather seek evidence of a Eusebian trail running, as it were, through Josephus' writings. We could even borrow and adapt Doherty's term and look for "Eusebian footprints". Certainly, if one examines the writings of Eusebius, he is often put forward as the very author of (at least), one of the suspected interpolations. Of course, this is an assumption as it stands, but the argument

is that *if* Eusebius is really the forger of the *TF,* then there may well be stylistic evidence that similarly points to him.

Doherty (2009: 535) has correctly shown that it is very easy for a counterfeiter to borrow typical Josephan terminology when creating their forgery. However, when these terms are wrongly recontextualised (in something as brief as the *TF*) their stylistic employment seems strange and looks quite unlike anything Josephus would have written. These stylistic idiosyncrasies are well-researched and cover many aspects of either Josephus' acknowledged writing style or comparisons with other writer's peculiarities.

Set out below are some primary examples of the more frequently discussed stylistic idiosyncrasies that, when dealt with by more critical, liberal scholars, predominantly end up comparing Josephus with Eusebius. It will also be quite evident that in each and every case where a reasonable, substantiated argument is made proving total interpolation of the *TF,* more conservative scholars will typically feel the need to launch an apologetic defence of at least a partial degree of authenticity that is easily identifiable by its improbability, naivety and illogic:

Wise man (*sophos anêr*)

"Wise man" is used to describe Jesus in the *TF*. In the early part of the twentieth century, most scholars accepted that this phrase was spurious. For example, Zeitlin (1931: 398) confirms that the phrase "wise man" was employed by Eusebius based on his conjecture of a non-Christian might have said about Jesus. This phrase is employed elsewhere by Josephus and, where there is little or no doubt as regards Josephus' genuine authorship, it is most typically applied to persons who are Jews.

For example in *Ant.* 8, 2, 7 / 53 in Hiram's epistle to King Solomon, Josephus writes: "It is fit to bless God that he hath committed thy father's government to thee, who art a wise man and endowed with all virtues". Again in *Ant.* 10, 11, 2 / 237, Josephus writes: "…whose name was Daniel, a wise man (*sophos anêr*) and one of great sagacity in finding out what was impossible for others to discover, and what was known to God alone…". Also, in *War*, 6, 5, 4 / 313 Josephus states: "The Jews took this prediction to belong to themselves in particular; and many of the wise men (*sophon*) were thereby deceived in their determination". In the latter example,

Josephus uses the phrase "many of those who were highly skilled". Regardless, "*sophos*" or "*sophon*" is the key adjective that is employed in all cases.

As an aside: these are precisely the sort of authentic statements and key phrases made by Josephus that would surely serve as useful examples for mimicry by a forger intent on creating the illusion of authenticity elsewhere in the manuscript with very little training or expertise.

Regardless, C.E. Price (2008: 27) sees the term as distinctly Josephan in character. As has already been discussed it is normally employed to describe notable Jewish individuals of great insight like a Solomon or a Daniel. In this context, C.E. Price (2008: 27) states that it is "not surprising that Josephus would use the phrase 'wise man' to refer to Jesus". He obviously overlooks the more conservative need to emphasise that if the *TF* is in any way authentic, Josephus was originally neutral if not negative towards Jesus–a common argument of those in support of partial authenticity.

Maker of wonderful works (*paradoxôn ergôn poiêtês*)

More conservative scholars who wish to prove that Josephus is the author of the *TF* will often claim that "*paradoxôn ergôn*" should be translated in a very neutral if not negative vein.

Specifically, these scholars will typically argue that when the *TF* refers to "*paradoxôn ergôn*" it *should not* be translated as "wonderful works" and may mean little more than say, "startling" or possibly "unusual" occurrences.

Meier (1991: 81) gives his reader a lengthy explanation as to why he thinks Josephus chose to use this specific term. The underlying insinuation here is that this phrase should not be interpreted as anything akin to "miraculous". Instead, it is argued that this phrase should be seen as analogous to say, "cheap tricks" employed to hoodwink a gullible audience. Hence it should be viewed as quite negative and thus anti-Christian in tone. This quite contrived reasoning is, of course, necessary to maintain Josephus as the author of the *TF,* and thus conserve credible extra-biblical/scriptural evidence for an historical Jesus. C.E. Price (2008: 28) even goes so far as to justify his faith in Josephus' authorship by stating that "ancient authors commonly used words in unusual ways". Although this may be quite true, it hardly serves as useful evidence for a specific term being employed by a particular author. He then tries to justify this generalisation by referring to

unusual word usage in "undisputed" letters of Paul. The fact that no letter of Paul is undisputed makes this–the weakest of arguments–all the more absurd.

However, a closer inspection of Josephus' other passages where the term "*paradoxôn"* features, reveals that, in some twenty instances, he more typically uses this term to describe something clearly positive, divine and miraculous. Not once does Josephus employ this adjective to describe something related to the natural world order. Possibly a more balanced translation would be "wonderful" or "contrary to expectation" (which still implies a miracle) and thus "*paradoxôn ergôn*" was surely meant to be interpreted as "wonderful works" or events that occurred by dint of divine authority or agency.

Josephus (*Ant.* 2, 16, 4 / 345)[189] states:

> But the Hebrews were not able to contain themselves for joy at their wonderful (*paradoxôu*) deliverance, and destruction of their enemies; now indeed supposing themselves firmly delivered, when those that would have forced them into slavery were destroyed, and when they found they had God so evidently for their protector.

Here the context seems to indicate that Josephus is employing the term "*paradoxôu*" to express something akin to divine intervention, since the Jews were expecting the worst, and the deliverance was somewhat unexpected. Certainly the term, as employed here, cannot possibly be interpreted in any negative sense.

Again, when Josephus makes mention of the prophet Elisha (*Ant.* 9, 4, 3 / 58)[190], who, on behalf of the Samaritans, prayed for their enemies (i.e. the Syrians) to be blinded by a divine mist, he talks about "an action so divine and surprising" (*paradoxô pramati keimenon*). Thus, even though the term "*paradoxô*" is translated by Whiston (1895) as "surprising" the context is

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[189] English translation according to Whiston (Tr.) 1895. *Flavius Josephus. The Works of Flavius Josephus,* in *Perseus Digital Library* [Online]. Available: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0146%3Abook%3D2%3Awhiston+chapter%3D16%3Awhiston+section%3D4 [6 September 2014].

[190] English translation according to Whiston (Tr.) 1895. *Flavius Josephus. The Works of Flavius Josephus,* in *Perseus Digital Library* [Online]. Available: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0146%3Abook%3D9%3Awhiston+chapter%3D4%3Awhiston+section%3D3 [6 September 2014].

clearly miraculous and positive for the Samarians who ultimately benefited from the overt divine intervention.

Other notable examples include the Jews enjoying a "wonderful (*paradoxôu*) deliverance" in *Ant.* 3, 1, 1 / 1; Moses obtaining water after striking the rock in *Ant.* 3, 1, 7 / 35 and the specific *TF* formulation of the phrase (*paradoxôn ergôn*) which appears in *Ant.* 9, 8, 6 / 182, when Josephus refers to the divine and miraculous works of the prophet Elisha.

More liberal scholars have no problem with this sort of information since it merely supports their notion that Josephus is unlikely to employ a pet phrase in one way throughout his works, and then, in one single instance (i.e. the *TF*), break with his normal conventions. Certainly, Doherty (2009: 540), emphasises that in the *Antiquities* alone, the term "*paradoxôn*" and its derivatives, is never employed to indicate anything that could be construed as negative. The only exception would be the implied negative reaction that a particular character in a narrative might have to something being "miraculous". A good example here is when Nebuchadnezzar is gripped with fear when he sees the "surprising/miraculous" appearance of the oracular writing on his wall (cf. *Ant.* 10, 11, 2 / 235). Here the specific term employed by Josephus (i.e. "*paradoxô*"), implies an event that is incredible and contrary to expectation. This can in no way be deemed negative or naturalistic; rather it accurately describes the upbeat, wondrous, divine disposition of the event. In this context, Doherty (2009: 540) confirms that if viewed rationally, it is not possible to interpret the term *"paradoxôn ergôn*" in a negative light.

Doherty (2009: 539–540), rejects the obviously belaboured attempt of certain Christian scholars to find negativity (or even neutrality) where there is obvious positivity. Indeed, such perceived pessimism is irreconcilable with the passage's subsequent comment concerning those who "receive the truth with pleasure". Incidentally, most Christian scholars accept this latter upbeat passage as being present in their supposed "original" version of the *TF*.

Finally, Doherty (2009: 539) claims that the adjective "*paradoxôn*" was regularly used by the writers of the day to suggest something quite optimistic if not miraculous. As evidence, he cites writers such as Philo of Alexandria (when referring to the miracles of God during the Exodus) (cf. *DVM,* I, 38); the author(s) of Luke when referring to the miracles performed

by Jesus (cf. Luke 5: 26); and Origen (cf. *Cels.* I, 6)[191], when he states:

> And he [Celsus] next proceeds to bring a charge against the Saviour Himself, alleging that it was by means of sorcery that He was able to accomplish the wonders (*paradoxa*) which He performed.

The phrase "*paradoxôn ergôn*" becomes even more problematic when the term "*poiêtês*" is added. *Paradoxôn ergôn poiêtês* can be translated as either "a maker of wonderful works" or a "poet of wonderful things".

Other eminent Josephus scholars seem to agree with this observation. For example, Mason (2003: 231) points out that when Josephus employs the term "*poiêtês*" he unswervingly *means* "poet". Indeed, he is quite emphatic on this point (cf. Mason, 2003: 231). Similarly, Eisler (1931: 53) substantiates that, in the writings of Josephus, the word "*poiêtês*" always means "poet", whereas it is mostly later Christian writers who tend to employ this term to refer to "worker", "doer" or "perpetrator".

With the foregoing arguments in mind, *if* Josephus actually wrote the *TF* (which contains the phrase: "*paradoxôn ergôn poiêtês*"), then, based on similar word usage elsewhere, he is more likely to have meant "poet of miracles" and was referring to bona fide supernatural and positive events like divine miracles. Therefore, if Josephus really did know of an historical Jesus he was uncharacteristically extremely positive and even possibly idealistic about this individual's religious mission and popular acclaim.

However, *if* Josephus *was not* the author of the *TF* and its specific phrase: "*paradoxôn ergôn poiêtês*", then we must conclude that the forger lived sometime after Josephus. This was a time, when the term "*poiêtês*" meant "worker" or "doer" and clearly points to later Christian usage and meaning. This possibility supports the preliminary findings that the unknown interpolator, inter alia, wanted his reader to:

1. uncritically accept that Josephus wrote the *TF*; and

2. naively believe that even Josephus believed Jesus to be a "producer" of miracles as well as the "Christ".

If the second possibility is the correct one then, here, the suspected

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[191] English translation according to Kirby, 2014b. *Origen. Contra Celsus* in *Early Christian Writings*. [Online]. Available: http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/origen161.html [23 July 2014].

interpolator certainly made good use of Josephus' writing style and choice of idioms from other places in his writings in order to try and give his forgery a more genuine feel. In addition, the interpolator needed to convince his reader that Jesus was truly divine. However, he was also trapped within his own paradigm of meaning and would have interpreted the Greek, Josephan or not, in what was (for him) a more contemporary idiom. Hence *poiêtês only* meant "producer" for the forger. This mistake (which is one of many) made by the forger provides valuable evidence for more critical contemporary scholars to make better informed opinions about actual authorship and provenance.

Olson (2013a: 103) believes that, based on his survey of Eusebius' extant writings, "*paradoxôn ergôn poiêtês*" must be viewed as distinctly Eusebian in tone. He also confirms that Josephus never uses *poiêtês* elsewhere in the sense of "maker" or "doer". He only employs it in the sense of "poet." He also points out that except for the *TF*, Josephus never employs *poiêtês* together with *paradoxôn* in the sense of "wonder-working". However, the combination of *paradoxôs* and *poiêo in the sense of* "wonder-working" occurs more than one hundred times in Eusebius' writings. Finally, Olson confirms that (apart from the *TF*), *poiêtês* combined with *paradoxôn ergon* does not appear in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* database of extant Greek literature *until* the time of Eusebius. What is extremely convincing here, is that if one takes up Olson's claims, it becomes clear that only Eusebius employs the following terms together when referring to Jesus, viz.: "*paradoxôn*"*,* "*ergon*" *and* "*poiêtês*".[192]

Finally, Olson (1999: 305–322) confirms that in Eusebius' *Dem. ev.* III, 4–5 (which of course contains a reference to the *TF*), Eusebius promises to repudiate those who either reject the claim that Jesus performed divine works or try to dismiss his miracles as mere deceit or wizardry. In short, Eusebius confirms that *paradoxôn ergôn poiêtês* is a very positive statement. Consider the following passage in *Hist. eccl.* I, 2 / 23[193] where Eusebius seems to emulate the *TF*:

> Then, finally, at the time of the origin of the Roman Empire, there appeared again to all men and nations throughout the world, who had been, as it were, previously assisted, and were now fitted to receive the knowledge of the Father, that same teacher of virtue, the minister of the Father in all good

[192] Cf. *The Proof of the Gospel*, 114–115, 123, 125 and *Hist. eccl.* I, 2 / 23.
[193] English translation according to Richardson (Tr.). 1890. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2nd Series, Vol. 1, in *New Advent.org* [Online]. Available: (http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/25021.htm [6 September 2014].

> things, the divine and heavenly Word of God, in a human body not at all differing in substance from our own. He did and suffered the things which had been prophesied. For it had been foretold that one who was at the same time man and God should come and dwell in the world, should perform wonderful works (*paradoxôn ergôn poiêtên*), and should show himself a teacher to all nations of the piety of the Father. The marvellous nature of his birth, and his new teaching, and his wonderful works (*paradoxôn ergôn*) had also been foretold; so likewise the manner of his death, his resurrection from the dead, and, finally, his divine ascension into heaven.

This of course creates a problem for those more contemporary conservative scholars who want to:

1. Retain Josephus as the author of at least some form of the *TF* (since it offers extra biblical/scriptural proof that Jesus actually existed; and

2. Ensure that Josephus remains true to his character as the authentic author by having him express himself in his more normal derogatory and negative fashion (since they do not want anything that points to a later upbeat Christian interpolation).

Unfortunately, one cannot have one's cake and eat it too. Consequently, regardless of authorship, the *TF* phrase "*paradoxôn ergôn*" must refer to miraculous, divine works. Accordingly, if Josephus actually employed this phrase, he must have been:

1. A true believer in Jesus' divinity;

2. Precociously knowledgeable about specific Christian terminology, possibly several decades before it became more common place;

3. Well-versed in, inter alia, the Gospel of Luke which according to some scholars was written at the precisely the same time as the *Antiquities* (c. 94 C.E.).

As no other text allegedly written by Josephus can in any way support this construction, given the verifiable evidence, the entire phrase "*paradoxôn ergôn poiêtês*" must be seen as a deliberate forgery.

Principal men (*prôtôn andrôn*)

Goldberg (1995: 69) points out that when Josephus discusses the accusers of Jesus in the *TF* as "the principal men among us" he is uncharacteristically

narrating in the first person. Here Goldberg (1995: 69) carefully explains that normally, Josephus is cautious to distance himself from his subject and avoid the first person. For example, when talking about his own people he will talk about "the Jews" and not "us". When he makes an exception to this rule, Josephus will first digress from the main body of text and then (for the benefit of his Græco-Roman audience), he will supply a lengthy explanation employing such phrases as "our laws", "our customs" or "our nation".

C.E. Price (2008: 31) argues that the phrase "the principal men among us" is typically Josephan since a Christian would have written either "the Jews" or "the *Sanhedrin*" or the "Sadducees" and/or "Pharisees".

As has been discussed in some detail, more critical scholars have taken issue with the text which translates as the "principal men among us". In this context, a brief survey of Josephus' writings strongly suggest that he never seems to link the phrase "principal men" directly with the phrase "among us". In addition, several scholars, including Doherty (2009, 556), Mason (2003) and Olson (1999) have each pointed out that although Josephus elsewhere refers to the *prôtôn andrôn* (principal men); he consistently refers to the principal men of a city. In this context, he does not employ the first person plural.

On the other hand, C.E. Price (2008: 31) makes a number of illuminating claims:

Seemingly oblivious of the fact that if someone wanted to interpolate something about Jesus being crucified by Pilate, then they could do worse than insert it into an existing context related to the actions of said Pontius Pilate, C.E. Price (2008: 31) makes the naïve observation that the reference to Pilate is "neutral".

Moreover, in distinct contradiction to Mason's and Olson's findings, C.E. Price (2008: 31) goes on to make the pronouncement that the "reference to 'principal men' is very common in Josephus, but has no counterpart in the gospels or in any other early Christian literature." C.E. Price obviously thinks that because the term "principal men" does not exist in the gospels it somehow proves that a non-Christian wrote the *TF*?

He then refers to Mason's (2003: 169) finding that the phrase "principal men among us" is unusual because elsewhere Josephus employs the phrase "principal men" in the context of a place or city such as Jerusalem. Of course, as already noted, this is also argued by Olson (1999). However, C.E. Price feels that this fact does not do much to weaken the partial interpolation

theory. Furthermore, because the term has a higher concentration in book 18 of *Antiquities* he feels that its conjunction with "among us" (which he tells us is in itself a quite common Josephan phrase) clearly favours partial authenticity.

Regardless, C.E. Price's assertion that the term "principal men" does not appear in "early Christian literature" could be seen as deliberately misleading and ambiguous:

1. Firstly, (with apologies to C.E. Price), Eusebius, who *does* employ the term must surely qualify as an early Christian writer?

2. Secondly, if C.E. Price is in fact aware of Eusebius' employment of the term, is he then implying that Eusebius is *not* an early Christian writer? And accordingly, he must have intended the adjective "early" to refer to Christian writers who were active before the fourth century C.E.? Irrespective, he deliberately neglects to mention Eusebius in his "analysis". Considering that C.E. Price (2008: 32) later refers to Eusebius in the context of possible "early Christian", interpolators makes this point even more forcibly.

As a consequence, this line of argument clearly lacks intellectual integrity.

Drew over (*epêgageto*)

In the *TF*[194] we read: "He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the (Greek) Gentiles".

Within this context, more conservative scholars, in their attempt to preserve the *TF*'s status as an authentic Josephan utterance, endeavour to translate the term "*epêgageto*" as "leading into error" or something equally disapproving implying deception or deceitfulness. However, when not attempting to stress any negativity, it is more reasonable to translate "*epêgageto*" as "drew over" or even "won over", both of which are surely more optimistic in nature.

In addition, Doherty (2009: 540), points out that if one also considers the

[194] English translation according to Whiston. 1999. *The New Complete Works of Josephus:* 662, (*Jewish Antiquities*, 18, 3, 3 / 63–64). Cf. *Flavius Josephus*, *Antiquitates Judaicae*, Ed. B. Niese in *Perseus Digital Library* [Online]. Available: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text: 1999.01.0145 [30 May 2012].

preceding phrase: "…a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure" coupled with the subsequent statement: "…, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him", it makes it quite difficult to see any negativity in "*epêgageto*". Doherty again concludes that conservative scholars are imprudently attempting to present an apologetic when they try to claim that the *TF* is any way neutral or negative.

We have already reviewed arguments submitted for a negative response to "*paradoxôn ergôn*". To be balanced we might want to allow for the unlikely possibility that certain of the Ante-Nicene church fathers and apologists refused to employ the *TF* because of its then *perceived* negativity. However, even after making this concession, it is hard to imagine *each and every one* of these writers during the first four centuries of Christianity, blindly conforming to this single point of view. Lastly, the supporting evidence shows that Eusebius (early fourth century C.E.), had no qualms about employing these verses when he engaged them to support his arguments. As a consequence, we are left with one of only two rational possibilities:

1. Eusebius, for whatever reason, invented the *TF* in its entirety; or

2. Eusebius was presented with an earlier version of the *TF* that was so negative, no-one before his time, dared to quote from it, forcing him, due to the pressures of his own agenda, to reformulate it.

It should go without saying that the second probability is highly unlikely.

Those loved him at the first did not forsake him

Doherty (2009: 552) stresses that one can but marvel that the *TF* contains many elements that are so conveniently germane to underscoring Eusebius' many central arguments. Doherty (2009: 553) also draws our attention to another issue, namely, if the *TF* was originally couched in such negative tones, how does that explain the very positive comments including references to disciples who clearly "*agapêsantes*" (loved) Jesus?

Furthermore, even if Eisler (1931: 61)[195] is correct and the term

[195] Eisler's complete and somewhat whimsical reconstruction of the *TF* reads as follows:

> Now about this time arose an occasion for new disturbances, a certain Jesus, a wizard of a man, if indeed he may be called a man who was the most monstrous of all men, whom his disciples call a son of God, as having done

"*agapêsantes*" should in fact be translated as only "like" or "admire", it is still too positive to elicit such a negative concluding sentence as implied by, inter alia, Meier, Eddy and Boyd, and can only strengthen a positive, cheerful, interpretation which is, in fact, completely out of character for Josephus.

Another possible "Eusebian footprint" contained in the *TF* concerns the text that indicates that despite the fact that Pontius Pilate condemned Jesus to the cross, those who had loved him did not forsake him. Mason (2003: 169) points out this are an unusual phrase as the words "did not forsake him" can also be rendered "they did not cease". However, these words are in fact left incomplete in the text. Specifically, the reader would only know what had "ceased" by reference to the preceding sentence. This is as irregular in Greek as it is in English. More importantly, this type of construction is not found in any of Josephus' writing outside of the *TF*.

Olson (1999) confirms that this specific text encapsulates Eusebius' predominant argument concerning Jesus' divinity as found in his *Dem. ev.* III, 5. Specifically, Eusebius wants to assure his reader that had Jesus been a fraudster, then it would naturally follow that his disciples would have eagerly deserted him. In addition, they would have eschewed his now suspect teachings the moment he was dishonourably crucified as a common criminal at the hands of the Romans.

It must be remembered that it was Eusebius who first cited the *TF* before 311 C.E. Scholars of the calibre of Feldman (1998: 57), see this fact as unbelievable given that no one else up to this time had ever bothered to make use of the *TF*. Within this context, Eusebius' "convenient" fourth

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> wonders such as no man hath ever yet done…He was in fact a teacher of astonishing tricks to such men as accept the abnormal with delight…. And he seduced many also of the Greek nation and was regarded by them as the Messiah… And when, on the indictment of the principal men among us, Pilate had sentenced him to the cross, still those who before had admired him did not cease to rave. For it seemed to them that having been dead for three days, he had appeared to them alive again, as the divinely-inspired prophets had foretold -- these and ten thousand other wonderful things -- concerning him. And even now the race of those who are called "Messianists" after him is not extinct.

Eisler, 1931. *The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist according to Flavius Josephus' recently discovered "Capture of Jerusalem" and other Jewish and Christian Sources:* 61.

century "discovery" of a first century, extra-biblical/scriptural witness confirming that Jesus was a/ divine (i.e. more than a man); b/ spoke the truth; and c/ was not abandoned by his disciples is nothing short of wondrous serendipity. What makes this all the more suspicious is that (as has been stated elsewhere), this particular collection of positive attributes ascribed to an individual is not at all Josephan in character.

The third day

Those conservative scholars that reject certain portions of the *TF* but still believe it to have a genuine Josephan core, normally agree that the text that speaks to Jesus rising on the third day is an obvious insertion[196]. Regardless, it would also seem that even here, Eusebius is the most likely candidate for composing this largely accepted interpolation, since proof for the resurrection of Christ also concurs with Eusebius' avowed agenda. As an example, in his *Dem. ev.* III, 2[197] Eusebius, appealing to the Jewish prophets, states:

> They foretold the coming of a prophet and the religion of a lawgiver like Moses, his race, his tribe, and the place he should come from, and they prophesied the time of his appearance, his birth, and death, and resurrection, as well as his rule over all the Gentiles, and all those things have been accomplished, and will continue to be accomplished in the sequence of events, since they find their completion in our Lord and Saviour alone.

Lastly, Eisler (1931: 61) does not even see a reference to the "Third Day" as distinctly Christian. Indeed, he finds nothing strange in accepting that Josephus would have been aware of this tenet of Christian belief and merely repeated what he had heard!

Up until now (*eis eti te nun*)

Although Josephus does on occasion employ such phrases as "*eti nun*" and even, "*kai nun eti*", the exact wording "*eis eti te nun*" is only found in the *TF* to express the concept of "until this time" or "up until now". However, "*eis eti te nun*" and other similar formulations, occurs several times in the works of Eusebius.

From this perspective (regardless of the frequency of similar utterances in either of the two authors' writings), the specific phrase: "*eis eti te nun*" is

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[196] Cf. C.E. Price (2008: 32).

[197] English translation according to Ferrar (Tr.). 1920. *The Proof of the Gospel Being the Demonstratio Evangelica of Eusebius of Caesarea*, Vol. I: 117.

most often employed by Eusebius. In addition, this phrase appears solely in the context of his attempts to prove contemporary validity for the continuing veracity of both Jesus as well as the import of his message. By stark contrast, this specific phrase only occurs once in *Antiquities* and appears nowhere else in any of Josephus' four books. The fact that its single occurrence just happens to be in the disputed *TF* is seen by the more liberal camp as additional weighted evidence that falls squarely in the court of those that suspect total forgery.

Doherty (2009: 553–554) also draws our attention to two overtly apologetic scholars Eddy and Boyd (2007: 194). With reference to Meier (1991), they argue that the phrase "until now, the tribe of the Christians, who are named after him, has not died out" reflects Josephus' surprise. They (cf. Meier 1991: 66), hypothesise that Josephus believed Christianity to be an objectionable religious cult that foolishly believed their leader survived physical death on a Roman cross. Thus, he is taken aback by the fact that this sect is still managing to gain advocates up until his own time!

Olson (2013a: 109–110) has pointed out that this specific phrase "*eis eti te nun*" may well be an unconscious writer's trope or literary mannerism ("tell") that habitually crops up in the works of none other than Eusebius, yet, apart from the versions already cited, does not occur in the writings of Josephus.

Eusebius' is well known for his *Adversus Hieroclem* (composed before 303 C.E.), which sets out to refute the anti-Christian polemic of one *Sossianus Hierocles* (fl. 303 C.E.). *Hierocles* was the author of *Philalethes* (Lover of Truth). In this book, *Hierocles* compares the claimed life and activities of Jesus the Christ with those of the Neo-Pythagorean philosopher Apollonius of Tyana (c. 15–c. 100 C.E.). Undeniably, both biographies are quite similar.[198] *Hierocles* sets out to show that Apollonius' undisputed existence

[198] The two accounts are so similar that Ehrman was able to give the following short biography which most readers would normally assume referred to Jesus of Nazareth. In fact, the account describes the life of Apollonius of Tyana:

> Even before he was born, it was known that he would be someone special. A supernatural being informed the mother that the child she was to conceive would not be a mere mortal but would be divine. He was born miraculously, and he became an unusually precocious young man. As an adult he left home and went on an itinerant preaching ministry, urging his listeners to live, not the material things of this world, but for what is spiritual. He gathered a number of disciples around him, who became convinced that his teachings were divinely inspired, in no small part because he himself was divine. He

and activities are in fact far superior and (unlike those of Jesus), truly divine.

In his apologetic *Hier.* IV[199] Eusebius responds to *Hierocles.* Here he attempts to demonstrate, that, unlike Apollonius, Jesus' message continues to make an impact even in contemporary times. Eusebius appeals to his reader in words that again closely echo the *TF*:

> [L]et us ask at once, not which of them [i.e. Jesus or Apollonius] was the more divine nor in what capacity one worked more **wondrous and numerous miracles** than the other; nor let us lay stress on the point that our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ was the only man **of whom it was prophesied**, thanks to their divine inspiration, by **Hebrew sages** who lived far back thousands of years ago, that he should once come among mankind; nor on the fact that he converted to his own scheme of divine teaching so many people; nor that he formed **a group of genuine and really sincere disciples**, of whom almost without exaggeration it can be said that they were prepared to lay down their lives for his teaching at a moment's call; nor that he alone established a school of sober and chaste living **which has survived him** all along; nor that by his peculiar divinity and virtue he saved the whole inhabited world, and still rallies to his divine teaching races from all sides by tens of thousands (my emphases and insertion for clarity).

In support of Olson's observations, Doherty (2009: 552) draws his reader's attention to the work of Raskin who, although clearly operating on the fringes of academia, has made quite an impact on the *TF* debate through his self-published research.

Undeniably, a thorough review of certain (but not all) of Raskin's insights can be most rewarding. For example, Raskin (2006: 80–98) claims, that a "literary fingerprint" or if one prefers, a Eusebian "tell" is very evident in a number of passages from variously, Eusebius' *Theoph.*, *Haer., Dem. ev.* and *Hist. eccl.* Here Eusebius, needs to emphasise that Jesus' import (spoken of in the distant past), is still virile and relevant. He needs to show that Jesus

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> proved it to them by doing many miracles, healing the sick, casting out demons, and raising the dead. But at the end of his life he roused opposition, and his enemies delivered him over to the Roman authorities for judgment. Still, after he left this world, he returned to meet his followers in order to convince them that he was not really dead but lived on in the heavenly realm. Later some of his followers wrote books about him.

Cf. Ehrman. 2012. *Did Jesus Exist?: The Historical Argument for Jesus of Nazareth*: 208–209.

[199] English translation according to Conybeare (Tr.) 1912. *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana by Philostratus*, Vol. 2: 484–605.

has retained his veracity and has survived right up to (from his perspective), contemporary times. As a result, Eusebius often makes use of such phrases as "to our times", "even to the present day" and "even until now."

For example, in his *Theoph.* 3 / 31,[200] which unfortunately has not survived in its original Greek, Eusebius comments on Jesus' miracles:

> Nor was it only, that He impressed on the souls of those who (immediately) followed Him such power, that when, having done nothing worthy of death, they willingly underwent every species of punishment and torment, for the sake of the righteousness of that God who is overall; but also, on those who received (it) from them; and so again, on those who came afterwards; and on those even to this present, and (who live) in our own times;–How does this not transcend every sort of miracle?

This evidence, as should be expected, is almost reflexively rebutted by the more conservative school. Given that all researchers concerned, are supposedly privy to the same textual evidence, it should be seen as highly significant that such contrary conclusions can be obtained as a result of ratiocinating the self-same evidence. However, as is so palpable, especially in the *TF* debate, it is a scholar's particular worldview that seems to be more important than the specific facts. For example, Eisler (1929: 56) feels that there are certain phrases that still equate to the expression: "*eis eti te nun*" that are in fact equally *common* to Josephus.

However, to be fair, even Eisler (1929) at least supports the *possibility* of later Christian interpolation because the specific phrase employed in the *TF* is identified by its redundant accumulation of particles and that is *not characteristic* of Josephus but is employed by later authors.

Regardless, more conservative commentators try to create a different interpretation by maintaining that the translation, accepted for many centuries now, may not be so accurate after all. Here, typically traditionalist scholars try to put forward the argument that possibly we are not reading this last sentence of the *TF* correctly. Perhaps it should not be read as a positive utterance at all but rather (as is normally the claim by Christian scholars), as a more negative, typically Josephan comment. If so, they argue,

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[200] English translation according to Lee (Ed. and Tr.). 1843. *Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea on the Theophania, or Divine Manifestation of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* (Transcribed by Pearse, 2002) in *New Advent.Org*. [Online]. Available: http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/eusebius_theophania_04book3.htm [30 July 2014].

it would suggest some degree of authenticity. Here again Eisler (1929) attempts to come to the rescue of the conservative interpretation, and suggests that the wording: "has not died out" may in fact indicate Josephus' frustration that this unsavoury cult was unfortunately still in existence "*eis eti te nun*".

To support this interpretation, Eisler (1929) highlights the phrase "*ouk epelike*" which he suggests should be translated as "it has not died out yet". He suggests that maybe his more *accurate* translation reflects what he terms "a silent hope" on Josephus' part, that perhaps, in time, this bothersome cult will thankfully disappear.

Tribe (*Phûlon*)

In the final sentence of the *TF* a reference is made to the "*phûlon*" (tribe) of the Christians. Doherty (2009: 554) expresses the obvious sentiment, that the word "*phûlon*" (tribe) should surely be a common one, given the fact that Josephus, inter alia, wrote about the history of the Jewish people. Despite this expectation, Josephus does not employ the term "*phûlon*" when he refers to the adherents of a religion. For example, when referring to his own Jewish kinfolk in his *Ant.* 14, 7, 2 / 115[201], Josephus refers to Jews as "this tribe of men," which seems more likely to refer to Jewish ethnicity. Specifically, he states:

> …and it is hard to find a place in the habitable earth that hath not admitted this tribe *phûlon*) of men.

Mason (2003: 232) confirms that the phrase "tribe of the Christians" in the *TF* is quite abnormal. Mason points out here, that Josephus uses the word "tribe" (*phûlon*) on eleven occasions, mostly to indicate a race of people. The only two exceptions are when Josephus uses *phûlon* to refer to a person's gender and to a swarm (i.e. of locusts). In this regard, Mason views it as irregular for Josephus to refer to members of a religious sect as though they were a distinct racial group. This point is even more pertinent when one considers that in the *TF* Jesus is also described as being a Jew condemned by the Jewish leadership.

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[201] English translation according to Whiston (Tr.) 1895. *Flavius Josephus. The Works of Flavius Josephus,* in *Perseus Digital Library* [Online]. Available: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0146%3Abook%3D14%3Awhiston+chapter%3D7%3Awhiston+section%3D2 [7 September 2014].

Mason (2003: 232) also makes the additional comment that it is later Christian writers who sometimes refer to fellow Christians as a "third race". In this latter context, this might be viewed as additional circumstantial evidence to support a much later third or fourth century Christian interpolation.

As an aside, it is a common mistake (especially of more contemporary times), to assume that Jews should only be viewed as an ethnic or racial group. Even many Jews themselves naively believe this to be true and ironically, a distinctly racial or ethnic yardstick has often been used as a device to identify, stereotype and even persecute Jews. In reality, practicing Jews can be of any ethnicity even if many can still trace some link to a Hebrew origin. The facts are that most modern people who call themselves Jews may also have, inter alia, Eastern European, Anglo Saxon, Ethiopian and even Chinese roots. In short, Judaism, especially since 70 C.E., has been primarily a religion and technically anyone, regardless of race or ethnicity, can convert to become Jewish.

What is overlooked by most scholars involved in the *TF* debate is that from the time of Josephus onwards, extremely large numbers of Romans (from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds) converted to one form or another of Judaism. According to Scheidel (2007) it is now known (of course guesstimates vary depending on the source), that by 164 C.E. some 61.4 million people were living in the Roman Empire. Of this number, at least 10% were Jews. These individuals did not all descend from Hebrew stock; most were recent converts. Aberbach (2010) confirms that Judaism reached the acme of its evolution shortly before the revolt of 66 C.E. He also points out (with reference to Baron 1993), that the Jews comprised as much as 10 percent of the Western Roman empire and 20 percent of the Eastern Roman empire.

Zeitlin (1928: 240) was one of the first scholars to notice the similarities between the *TF* and the tell-tale writer's trope of Eusebius. He correctly realised that the phrase "tribe of Christians" reveals the hand of Eusebius. Indeed, Eusebius is the only author to have employed the word tribe (*phûlon*) in connection with Christians.[202]It should be pointed out that this realisation dates back some time: Zeitlin (1931: 395–396) reminds his reader that the earliest scholar to accuse Eusebius of the *TF* forgery was Le Fèvre (1655). Zeitlin (1928: 231) concludes that "This passage, as is well known, has been rejected by scholars of note as not authentic". With this

[202] Of course if the *TF* was ever proved to be authentic then Josephus would be the only exception to this finding.

amplified background in mind, Doherty's (2009: 554) findings become most pertinent. By the fourth century, during the period when conversion to Christianity dominated the scene, Eusebius, employs the noun *"phûlon*" in two distinct ways:

1. When referring to what *he sees* as being an ethnic or national grouping of people. Examples include Jews, Ethiopians, Paeonians, etc.
2. When attempting to categorise an identical group of objects or natural things.

An example for the employment of "*phûlon*" (tribe) is found in Eusebius' *Praep. ev.* VII, 15 / 12[203] (c. 313 C.E.):

> Thus then after those first luminaries which are reckoned among incorporal powers, and excel in power and essence of intellectual light, there are countless "*phûla*" [tribes] and families of stars and a vast difference incomprehensible to us, but not to the Maker of the universe [my insertion].

It will be noticed that Eusebius makes use of the word "*poiêtês*" when referring to the act of creation. Eusebius also employs the "tribe" theme in his *Praep. ev.* VII, 22 / 9[204] except here he does not employ the specific noun "*phûlon*" (tribe) but rather "*génos*":

> If however any one shall say that matter is in God, it is equally necessary to inquire whether it is by God's being separated from Himself, just as "*géne*" [tribes] of living creatures subsist in the air, by its being divided and parted for the reception of the creatures that arise in it; or whether matter is in God as in a place, that is, as water is in land [my insertion].

As has been pointed out previously, due to his agenda, Eisler, (1929: 56) is intent on demonstrating a more pejorative tone to the closing sentences of the *TF*. He sees the noun *phûlon* (tribe) as not being employed to indicate ethnicity but rather as a more derogatory grouping of individuals. Eisler, in accord with his vain attempts to prove the Josephan origin of the *TF* explains that *phûlon* does not describe an "ethnical unit". He also claims that the term "Christians" makes it certain that the author of the *TF* did not intend to indicate a term of affection. Doherty (2009: 554) roundly attacks Eisler's explanation and points out, that at no time, does Eisler bother to provide an

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[203] English translation according to Gifford (Tr.). 1903. *Eusebii Pamphili: Evangelicae Praeparationis, Libri XV, Tomus III:* 325.
[204] English translation according to Gifford (Tr.). 1903. *Eusebii Pamphili: Evangelicae Praeparationis, Libri XV, Tomus III:* 338–339.

example of this more depreciatory usage of the term in a comparable Greek text. On the other hand, Doherty is quite satisfied that the normal word that should have been applied when referring to ethnic groups would have been something like "*ethnos*" ("nation" or "people").

C.E. Price (2008: 32) asserts that the phrase "*phûlon*" is typical of Josephus but acknowledges Mason (2003: 169–170) who tells us that the term is unusual in the context of the *TF*. C.E. Price repeats Mason's (2003: 232), oft-quoted comment that it is very strange the *TF* refers to the Christians as a distinct racial group, given that he has just referred to Jesus as a Jew condemned by Jewish leaders. In this context, C.E. Price gets around Mason's concern by assuming that a non-Christian author like Josephus would have wanted to specify that the Christians (although consisting of both Jew and Greek alike) would have needed to be emphasised as being distinctive from other regular Jews and Greeks. Hence, Josephus could easily have used the term "*phûlon*" to distinguish Christians as a separate group.

C.E. Price also proffers a very creative foil to Doherty's (2009: 554) substantiated assertion that Eusebius repeatedly makes use of the term and, as a consequence, is a prime suspect for being the composer of the *TF*. He states that Eusebius made use of the term purely because he was influenced by Josephus. C.E. Price (2008: 32) therefore believes that it is more judicious to assume that Josephus applies the term *phûlon* to Christians than it is to speculate that a later Christian writer concocted it.

Doherty (2009: 554) also explains that one needs to be aware of the fact that the term for "tribe" in Greek has two distinct forms:

1. *phûlé* (feminine) and

2. *phûlon* (neuter).

Both forms of this noun seem to enjoy comparable usage in ancient Greek literature. However, in all the *NT* texts, only the feminine form is ever employed, whereas in Josephus' works (although he clearly prefers the feminine version), he does on rarer occasions employ the neuter form. Doherty fully subscribes to this fact.

Of course, in the *TF* it is *phûlon* that is employed. This is distinctly non-gospel as well as being the least favoured form for this noun from a Josephan perspective. The more conservative group of scholars see this as evidence of authenticity. As seen from the quoted examples of his writing

style, Eusebius *also* favours the feminine form in his extant writings. However, Doherty (2009: 554–555), points out that the neuter form (i.e. "*phûlon*") occurs twice in *Hist. eccl.* III, 33 / 2 & 4. On both occasions it forms part of the quoted *TF* phrase that reads "the tribe of the Christians." This observation merely adds to the mounting evidence which points directly at Eusebius as the most likely forger of the *TF*.

Winning over Jews and Greeks

Olson (1999: 305–322) also comments on the *TF* phrase translated as "he won over many Jews and many Greeks". He believes we can be fairly certain that this is also Eusebian. After all, a detailed reading of the *NT* would seem to validate the interpretation that, if there ever was an historical Jesus, he never directly preached to the Gentiles. It is true, that he is recorded as coming into contact with them on occasion. Thus, within that presumed context, he could conceivably have associated with them to some degree or other. This possibility is not overtly indicated in the *NT.* No doubt, due to the pressures brought to bear by the mores of fourth century Christian missiology, Eusebius desperately required some extra-biblical/scriptural evidence to the contrary. In short, he needed to demonstrate that both Jew and Gentile (Greek) were equally ministered to by an historical Jesus. Olson (1999: 305–322) confirms this possibility when he, inter alia, points his readers to the *Dem. ev.* (completed before 311 C.E.) where Eusebius is intent on presenting to his reader a Jesus who revealed his divine powers to Jew and Gentile alike. According to Eusebius, Jesus did achieve this task, by virtue of his sermonising and his miracles. Good examples of this practise can be seen in *Dem. ev.* III, 5 / 107–109 and *Dem. ev.* III*,* 2.

Olson (2013a: 105) also finds evidence in the *Dem. ev.* V, 25) where Eusebius identifies Jesus as the saviour of human beings and the teacher of barbarians and Greeks alike. Olson emphasises here, that Eusebius places the recipients of the teaching in the genitive. Doherty (2009: 552) comments that Eusebius makes these assertions, despite the fact that Jesus (as portrayed by Matthew) pointedly instructs his disciples *not to go* to the gentiles.

Indeed, in Matt 10: 5–6[205] we read:

[205] English (NIV) text according to William D. Mounce and Robert H. Mounce, *The Zondervan Greek and English Interlinear New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 34-35.

> These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel."

Again in Matt 15: 22–26[206] the following tale is narrated:

> A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly." Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said. He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs."

Olson (1999: 305–322), strengthens his argument by demonstrating that within the context of the first two books of his *Dem. ev.*, Eusebius often pairs together the two opposing groups i.e. "Jew and Greek'" as a single concept. This is, of course, a more modern Christian practice, one where Christ came into this world, not only for the "lost sheep of Israel" but for *all* nations. Had Josephus actually written the *TF* he could not possibly have known that this change of doctrine was to occur in later Church policy and thus would have been more likely to concentrate on the role of Jesus for a solely Jewish audience.

As an aside, the conservative claim that the author could not have been a Christian and therefore *must* have been Josephus due to the leniency shown to the Jews is a very weak argument. It is made null and void by the *TF*'s implied criticism of the Jewish leadership at the time of the crucifixion: "And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross…"

Lastly, the suspected interpolator of the *TF* more likely belonged to a time when Gentiles made up the majority membership of the church (i.e. third to fourth centuries C.E.) and so would not have felt out of place claiming conversion amongst gentiles for an earlier epoch.

Doherty (2009: 552) argues that Josephus, in terms of a more accurate historical context (c. 95 C.E.) would not have been so eager to pair off these two specific factions (i.e. Jew and Greek) repeatedly. Furthermore, if the gospel accounts are to be taken as historical fact, why would Josephus want

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[206] English (NIV) text according to William D. Mounce and Robert H. Mounce, *The Zondervan Greek and English Interlinear New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 62.

to invent something that was not believed in his own day? Indeed, the relevance of converting the Greeks to a version of the Christian faith would only be fully understood by someone living in the late third or early fourth century.

Driven by the need (either conscious or unconscious) to preserve at all costs any viable notion of an independent and extra-biblical/scriptural Jesus, many scholars manage to propose, despite the evidence available, a completely antithetical conclusion.

For example, the overtly conservative and extremely credulous Eddy and Boyd[207] (2007: 194) postulate that the assertion that Jesus "won over" many Jews and Gentiles is incorrect because the gospels do not mention Jesus evangelising to the Gentiles. Meier (1991: 64–65) supports this view when he remarks that a possible Christian interpolator is *unlikely* to have wanted to go against the New Testament's divinely sanctioned presentation of Jesus' activities and message. Of course these authors are ignoring the history and development of the Christian religion in later times. Meier goes a little further and even suggests that Josephus may well have introduced into his text a reflection of what *he observed* in his own day. Here one might additionally presume that Josephus was really quite ignorant of the narratives contained in the gospels. Accordingly, he saw nothing contradictory in grouping the Jews together with the Greeks. Meier also reminds his reader, that "naïve retrojection is a common trait of Greco-Roman historians".

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[207] An indication of the level of naivety reflected by these two authors' preferred approach to research, is manifestly displayed by their introductory comments in their book entitled: *The Jesus Legend: A Case for the Historical Reliability of the Synoptic Jesus Tradition*. As proof of their claimed "objectivity" and scholarship they, inter alia, state:

> In all honesty, a main reason the authors of this book continue to profess faith in Jesus is because we cannot with integrity account for the evidence without concluding that the Gospel presentation of Jesus is deeply rooted in history. Of course, our faith is not *entirely* based on historical evidence. As we shall explain in chapter 12, our faith, like everyone else's faith (whatever its object), is also rooted in personal experience and deep intuitions of the heart. Still, if the Jesus story wasn't as solidly rooted in history as we've found it to be, we would, in all likelihood, still believe the Jesus story is the most *beautiful* legend ever told–but we wouldn't base our lives on the conviction that the story *actually happened*.

Cf. Eddy and Boyd, 2007: 13.

To be fair, Greco-Roman retrojection is something to consider here. However, given the realities of the context of this debate, Doherty (s.a.)[208] does not buy into this argument at all. He points out that "retrojection" is also a common activity of early Christian commentators and apologists and takes serious issue with the likes of Meier and company. Doherty's views are equally shared by Ehrman (1993: xii) who affirms that Christian scribes were in fact quite capable of altering their scriptural texts to "make them *say* what they were already known to *mean*."

As should be understood, this criticism is not levelled at Christian apologists alone–it is common knowledge that many scholars who worked within a Hellenistic ethos and even beyond, were all quite capable of retrojection and were also quite adept at adjusting what a previous author had written to agree with what they now believed *ought to have been stated*. After all, this is what happens when even well-meaning individuals naively accept their worldviews as inviolable and sacrosanct.

The table of contents issue

As is well known, and as many more liberal scholars have pointed out (cf. Doherty [2009], Feldman [1998], Mason [2003], Wells [2009], Zindler [2003] etc.) the extant Greek Josephan manuscripts include tables of contents applicable to each book of the *Antiquities*. However, no mention is made of the *TF*. Feldman (1998: 57) confirms that the table of contents of a Latin version of the fifth or sixth century omits mention of the *TF*.

Zindler (2003: 51) confirms that there is evidence that such tables were first attached to Latin manuscripts of the *Antiquities* as early as the fifth century.

What is of extreme importance to this debate is that Book 18 of the *Antiquities* boasts a table of contents which lists twenty topics dealt with within the book. What must be considered to be the most important issue here is not that Josephus (or his assumed Jewish assistants) failed to mention the *TF* in the table of contents–indeed such a small interlude about a minor Jewish religious leader (if authentic), would hardly warrant such an inclusion. What is far more telling is the undisputable fact that, as Christianity became more dominant, it is strange that nobody bothered to even embellish this table of contents due to the need to *highlight* Josephus'

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[208] Doherty. s.a. Supplementary Article No. 16: Josephus on the Rocks in *Jesus Puzzle.Humanists.Net* [Online]. Available: http://jesuspuzzle.humanists.net/supp16.htm [23 July 2014].

brief mention of Jesus within Book 18 of the *Antiquities.* This fact alone should be seen as possibly the most convincing evidence that no-one knew of the *TF* before the time of Eusebius.

More liberal scholars are happy to use this information to support the fact that the *TF never* existed (certainly not in *Ant.* 18, 3) and they may well be correct. However, to be balanced, this omission in *itself* is not sufficient to come to that conclusion. It is only, at best, circumstantial evidence that if removed from the context of all the other evidence against the existence of the *TF* before the fourth century, remains inconclusive.

The "silence" of Judean War

It is also a common observation by more sceptical scholars that extant versions of Josephus' earlier work (i.e. *Judean War*), do not mention either Jesus or John the Baptist, yet most other individuals and events covered in *Ant.* are repeated, often along quite similar lines.

For example, R. Grant (1963: 291) is well known for his sardonic comment that neither Jesus, James nor John the Baptist is to be found in the parallel passages in Josephus' earlier *Judean War*; "presumably Christians had become more important in the interval."

An example of this normal duplication of information found in the two manuscripts has already been witnessed in the parallel accounts of the activities of the Jewish Egyptian charlatan (cf. *War*, 2, 13, 5 / 261- 263 and *Ant.* 20, 8, 6 / 169–171).

In this regard, the repeated material concerning Pontius Pilate's oppressive activities in Judea (i.e. *Ant.* 18, 3, 1 / 55–59) is also covered in similar detail in *War*, 2, 9, 2 / 169– 4, / 177. Indeed, in both books (i.e. the *Judean War* and the *Antiquities.*), Josephus gives an account of Pilate's attempt to bring the Roman standards bearing the Emperor's images into Jerusalem, as well as his underhanded employment of the Temple monies to bring water into the city.

In the *Antiquities* these accounts of a crisis in Judea are immediately followed by the *TF*. However, in *War,* Josephus remains silent on the issue of Jesus and his ministry.

Detractors have also drawn attention to the similarity of the wording that Josephus employs in the two separate accounts concerning Pilate's two crises in Judea. Specifically, in *War*, 2, 9, 4 / 175 we read "After this he

[Pontius Pilate] raised another disturbance." This is characteristically very similar to the opening of the paragraph in *Ant.* 18, 3, 4 / 65–80, immediately following the *TF*, viz.: "About the same time also another sad calamity put the Jews into disorder."

In *War* this particular sentence appears immediately after the crisis connected with the bringing of images into Jerusalem and is employed to introduce the new crisis involving Pilate's misuse of the Temple funds.

In the *Antiquities* the comparable sentence with similar wording and import is used entirely differently. Here it introduces the topic of the expulsion of the Jews from Rome and immediately follows the *TF*. If the *TF* was really a complete forgery then this sentence would have originally followed on immediately *after* the account of the Temple fund crisis.

Reminiscent of the discussion concerning literary progression, the gist of the argument by more sceptical scholars is that, Josephus uses this sentence to move from one Jewish calamity to another. Thus, it proves that the *TF* is an interpolation as that particular passage does not concern a crisis.

What is certain is that, in more recent times, the entire *TF* has been known to be artificially placed by persons unknown, at either the beginning or the end of the manuscript of *War* but never at the same position as found in *Ant.*

More conservative scholars, such as C.E. Price (2008: 38) countered that the reader should not expect similar accounts in *Judean War* and *Antiquities* because they are "different in scope and breadth". The general import of C.E. Price's claim needs to be very carefully unpacked:

Firstly, we will have to shelve the obvious objection that, although the Pilate narrative as found in the *Antiquities* is quite possibly the only place where one could "safely" insert the *TF* (assuming it is an interpolation), it still remains a glaring imposition that interrupts the logical flow of the entire narrative. Thus, purely for the sake of argument, before continuing, we will have to temporarily assume that it is not an obvious insertion at all, but a perfectly acceptable passage that belongs where it currently exists in the *Antiquities.*

Moreover, it is common for commentators to make the inference that *War* was most likely written for the benefit of Vespasian and in places overlaps the same time frame as *Ant.* Here, *Antiquities'* focus is on the Jewish homeland, with more emphasis on history for history's sake.

Most would also agree that *Ant*. has a distinctly pro-Roman feel to it and certainly it is possible to consider that Josephus might have censored his text so as not to annoy his intended readership. However, if one examines the two Pilate narratives it is fair to state that neither *Judean War* nor *Antiquities* can claim to be any more or less violent than the other. In fact, they are so similar in tone it begs the question why so many scholars repeat this line of reasoning?

By a more general comparison, the later *Antiquities* (apart from being, at the time, the most comprehensive work on Jewish culture and history in the Greek language), was primarily composed for the benefit of attentive non-Jews. Here, Josephus felt that the Gentiles needed to be educated and enlightened as regards the ancient and culturally rich heritage, institutions and laws of the Jewish people.

Regardless, as has already been explained, it is inevitable that certain overlaps occur as regards replicated historical accounts, especially as this applies to Jewish history. Specifically, in the case of *War* and *Ant.* the duplication occurs from about the time of the Maccabees up until the time of Nero. Below (Figure 4) is a comparison of those specific chapters which contain a certain amount of overlapping material:

Judean War	***Antiquities***
Book 1–From the Taking of Jerusalem by Antiochus IV Epiphanes to the Death of Herod the Great	Book 12– From the Death of Alexander the Great to the Death of Judas Maccabeus Book 13– From the Death of Judas Maccabeus to the Death of Queen Alexandra Book 14– From the Death of Queen Alexandra to the Death of Antigonus Book 15– From the Death of Antigonus to the Finishing of the Temple by Herod
Book 2–From the Death of Herod till Vespasian was sent to subdue the Jews by Nero	Book 16– From the Finishing of the Temple by Herod to the Death of Alexander and Aristobulus Book 17– From the Death of Alexander and Aristobulus to the Banishment of Archelaus Book 18– From the Banishment of Archelaus to the Departure of the Jews from Babylon Book 19– From the Departure of the Jews from Babylon to Fadus the Roman

	Procurator Book 20– From Fadus the Procurator to Florus[209]
Book 3–From Vespasian's coming to Subdue the Jews to the Taking of Gamala	
Book 4–From the Siege of Gamala to the Coming of Titus to besiege Jerusalem	
Book 5–From the Coming of Titus to besiege Jerusalem to the Great Extremity to which the Jews were reduced	
Book 6–From the Great Extremity to which the Jews were reduced to the taking of Jerusalem by Titus	

Figure 4
A Comparison of Similar Historical Information as Contained in the *Judean War* and *Antiquities* Respec*tively*

Where the arguments of commentators like C.E. Price (ever mindful of the need to preserve the authenticity of the *TF* at all costs), become unstuck, is when one compares critically the structure of the two Pilate narratives which appear respectively in *War* and *Ant.* C.E. Price's attempt to contrast and differentiate the entire *Judean War* with the entire *Antiquities* as regards their respective "scope and breadth" is no more than a red herring. It is quite irrelevant that these two histories may well serve different purposes. What is far more important and pertinent to this debate are the specifics of the repeated historical and social contexts which deal with Pontius Pilate's atrocities.

***Judean War*, 2, 9, 2 / 169–4 / 177**	***Antiquities*, 18, 3, 1 / 55–2 / 62**
Pilate, sent as procurator into Judea by Tiberius.	Pilate, the procurator of Judea.
[Pilate] sent by night those images of Caesar that are called ensigns into Jerusalem. This excited a very great tumult among the Jews when it was day; for those that were near them	So [Pilate] introduced Caesar's effigies, which were upon the ensigns, and brought them into the city whereas our law forbids us the very making of images; on which account

[209] *Gessius Florus*–last procurator of Judea (c. 64–66 C.E.).

were astonished at the sight of them, as indications that their laws were trodden under foot; for those laws do not permit any sort of image to be brought into the city. Nay, besides the indignation which the citizens had themselves at this procedure, a vast number of people came running out of the country. These came zealously to Pilate to Caesarea, and besought him to carry those ensigns out of Jerusalem.	the former procurators were won't to make their entry into the city with such ensigns as had not those ornaments. Pilate was the first who brought those images to Jerusalem, and set them up there; which was done without the knowledge of the people, because it was done in the night time; but as soon as they knew it, they came in multitudes to Caesarea, and interceded with Pilate many days that he would remove the images.
upon Pilate's denial of their request, they fell down prostrate upon the ground, and continued immovable in that posture for five days and as many nights. On the next day Pilate sat upon his tribunal, in the open market-place, and called to him the multitude, as desirous to give them an answer.	and when [Pilate] would not grant their requests, because it would tend to the injury of Caesar, while yet they persevered in their request, on the sixth day he ordered his soldiers to have their weapons privately, while he came and sat upon his judgment-seat, which seat was so prepared in the open place of the city.
[He] gave a signal to the soldiers, that they should all by agreement at once encompass the Jews with their weapons; so the band of soldiers stood round about the Jews in three ranks. The Jews were under the utmost consternation at that unexpected sight. Pilate also said to them that they should be cut in pieces, unless they would admit of Caesar's images, and gave intimation to the soldiers to draw their naked swords.	[He] gave a signal to the soldiers to encompass them routed, and threatened that their punishment should be no less than immediate death, unless they would leave off disturbing him, and go their ways home.
Hereupon the Jews, as it were at one signal, fell down in vast numbers together, and exposed their necks bare, and cried out that they were sooner ready to be slain, than that their law should be transgressed.	But they threw themselves upon the ground, and laid their necks bare, and said they would take their death very willingly, rather than the wisdom of their laws should be transgressed.
Hereupon Pilate was greatly surprised at their prodigious superstition, and gave order that the ensigns should be presently carried out of Jerusalem.	[U]pon which Pilate was deeply affected with their firm resolution to keep their laws inviolable, and presently commanded the images to be carried back from Jerusalem to Caesarea.

After this he raised another disturbance, by expending that sacred treasure which is called Corban upon aqueducts, whereby he brought water from the distance of four hundred furlongs.	But Pilate undertook to bring a current of water to Jerusalem, and did it with the sacred money, and derived the origin of the stream from the distance of two hundred furlongs.
At this the multitude had indignation; and when Pilate was come to Jerusalem, they came about his tribunal, and made a clamour at it.	However, the Jews were not pleased with what had been done about this water; and many ten thousands of the people got together, and made a clamour against him, and insisted that he should leave off that design.
Now when he was apprised aforehand of this disturbance, he mixed his own soldiers in their armour with the multitude, and ordered them to conceal themselves under the habits of private men, and not indeed to use their swords, but with their staves to beat those that made the clamour.	So he habited a great number of his soldiers in their habit, who carried daggers under their garments, and sent them to a place where they might surround them.
He then gave the signal from his tribunal [to do as he had bidden them].	So he bid the Jews himself go away.
Now the Jews were so sadly beaten, that many of them perished by the stripes they received, and many of them perished as trodden to death by themselves; by which means the multitude was astonished at the calamity of those that were slain, and held their peace.	[H]e gave the soldiers that signal which had been beforehand agreed on; who laid upon them much greater blows than Pilate had commanded them, and equally punished those that were tumultuous, and those that were not; nor did they spare them in the least: and since the people were unarmed, and were caught by men prepared for what they were about, there were a great number of them slain by this means, and others of them ran away wounded. And thus an end was put to this sedition.

Figure 5
A Comparison of Historical Information Pertinent to Pontius Pilate as Contained in the *Judean War* and *Antiquities* Respectively

Above are pertinent extracts (Figure 5), from each of the two respective Pilate narratives; one refers to *Judean War* and the other to *Antiquities*. They

are presented in the order in which the historical events are narrated and any common occurrences are juxtaposed for comparative purposes: Here it is most significant that the original author of the *TF* must have chosen the specific Pilate narrative in *Ant.* as the ideal context within which to place his concise passage concerning Jesus the Christ. When one compares the same narrative in *War*, it becomes patently clear that apart from some stylistic differences the accounts are almost exactly the same. Most importantly, a common *fabula* is related employing identical "milestones". In short, regardless of which of the two narratives a person reads the resultant *fabula* (i.e. storyline) is almost identical.

Certainly, the only real difference between these two accounts concerns that which followed the cruel suppression of the Jewish rioters by Pilate's soldiers. In *War*, apart from the missing account of Jesus the Christ (*TF*) there is also no account of Roman atrocities in Rome and the burning of the Isiac temple.

Assuming that when he wrote *Ant.* Josephus also composed the *TF*, there are only two possible reasons why he did not include something about Jesus the Christ and the burning of the Temple of Isis when he wrote *War* nearly two decades earlier:

1. At the earlier date, Josephus did not want to recount too many tales of gratuitous Roman violence; and/or

2. As *War* was only concerned with historical events in Judea, Josephus is not at all concerned with what happened to Isiac cultists in Rome.

Assuming for the sake of argument that the *TF* is wholly authentic, as it is concerned solely with a Jewish occurrence that took place in Jerusalem and it is not too offensive for a Roman readership, then the absence of something similar in *War* is conspicuous (albeit with the hindsight of the *TF*).

However, before coming to any conclusion, one also needs to consider that Josephus introduces *War* with, inter alia, the following words (*War*, 1, Pr. 1)[210]:

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[210] English translation according to Whiston (Tr.) 1895. *Flavius Josephus. The Works of Flavius Josephus,* in *Perseus Digital Library* [Online]. Available: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0148 [23 July 2014].

> WHEREAS the war which the Jews made with the Romans hath been the greatest of all those, not only that have been in our times, but, in a manner, of those that ever were heard of; both of those wherein cities have fought against cities, or nations against nations; while some men who were not concerned in the affairs themselves have gotten together vain and contradictory stories by hearsay, and have written them down after a sophistical manner; and while those that were there present have given false accounts of things, and this either out of a humor of flattery to the Romans, or of hatred towards the Jews; and while their writings contain sometimes accusations, and sometimes encomiums, but nowhere the accurate truth of the facts; I have proposed to myself, for the sake of such as live under the government of the Romans, to translate those books into the Greek tongue, which I formerly composed in the language of our country, and sent to the Upper Barbarians;

If true to his word, Josephus is clearly stating that originally his *War* was not necessarily intended solely for the Romans and that he is merely translating an existing work from (presumably) Aramaic into Greek. Furthermore, he gives the distinct impression that he is not out to flatter anyone. He will tell the truth as he sees it. Indeed, Josephus confirms this interpretation, for a little later he criticises those writers who wish to show the greatness of the Romans at the expense of his own people. Then, in *War*, 1 , Pr. 9[211] he goes on to state:

> However, I will not go to the other extreme, out of opposition to those men who extol the Romans nor will I determine to raise the actions of my countrymen too high; but I will prosecute the actions of both parties with accuracy. Yet shall I suit my language to the passions I am under, as to the affairs I describe, and must be allowed to indulge some lamentations upon the miseries undergone by my own country.

This passage justifies a more likely context for Josephus' intentions. Compared to the innocuous comments of the *TF,* the Pilate narrative has real potential to displease a Roman readership, yet Josephus does not remain silent. Therefore, the absence of an inoffensive comment about an historical Jesus from *War* is quite difficult to explain.

However, if the *TF* is an interpolation then its absence from *War* should be quite obvious.

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[211] English translation according to Whiston (Tr.) 1895. *Flavius Josephus. The Works of Flavius Josephus,* in *Perseus Digital Library* [Online]. Available: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0148 [23 July 2014].

Finally, if we add to this the issues relating to the lack of literary progression and the fact that the *TF* gives all the warning signs of being out of context, then again, it is not even necessary to explain its absence from *War*.

The artificial creation of the "neutral account"

This section deals with the attempt by predominantly Christian scholars to remove the sting of obvious interpolation and rescue the *TF* as a valid historical record made by the hand of Josephus. Vermes (2010) gives his reasons in the online *Standpoint* Magazine for accepting certain sections of the *TF* and expurgating others:

The Christian passages, those that cannot be ascribed to the Jew Josephus, are easily distinguishable.

- The gloss, "If indeed one ought to call him a man", is the interpolator's reaction to the superhuman/divine Jesus being called a mere "wise man".
- "He was the Christ" is a common Christian interpolator's confession of the messianic status of Jesus. Nevertheless, the original text must have contained the epithet, "Christ", to account for the later statement about "the tribe of the Christians" named after the founder. The most likely original version read, "He was called the Christ", as Josephus puts it in the *James Passage*.
- The reference to Jesus attracting to himself "many Greeks" is without gospel support. Nevertheless, if Josephus knew of a mixed Jewish-Gentile church in Rome, he may have believed that a similar structure existed at the time of Jesus.
- The resurrection appearances on the third day, together with the relevant prophecies, are part of the apologetic arsenal of the early church and have nothing to do with Josephus.

Thus, the more moderate version as proffered by Vermes would read more or less as follows and best approximates what many conservative scholars would have us believe was the original shorter version of the *TF*:

> Now about this time there lived Jesus a wise man, for he was a doer of wonderful works and a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. He was known as the Christ and when Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing among us, had condemned him to be crucified, those who in the first place had come to love him did not forsake him. And the tribe of the Christians, so called after him, continues to the present day.

This, they claim, is the *TF* stripped of all overt "gospel flavour" and thus the more likely original wording employed by Josephus.

This resultant *TF* (and similar renditions) is often referred to as the "neutral" account and, as has already been alluded to, far from removing overt Christian content, this action emphasises the degree to which the entire *TF* is steeped in Christian concepts of a period somewhat later than the first century of the Common Era.

Most conservative scholars eagerly accept the "partial authenticity" thesis because it conveniently leaves them with enough "Josephan" material to claim an historical reference to Jesus. What is strange is that the vast majority never mention the problem that if even they can see something fallacious about this out of place passage due to its overt Christian glosses why should any of it be authentic? The Christian glosses are the very indication that the entire text is suspect. To simply remove the bits that one does not like and artificially reconstruct something intelligible with those words that can safely be regarded as devoid of Christian content makes absolutely no sense.

Regardless, based purely on consensus of opinion, conservative scholars argue that the reason that anyone would want to claim that the entire text is fraudulent is primarily to disprove the existence of Jesus. As they know Jesus exists, it is obvious that Josephus must have heard about him and thus the reconstructed passage is authentic. In this regard, C.E. Price (2008: 25) informs his reader that the majority of scholars favour partial authenticity. Furthermore, he believes that the only persons who would disagree with this view *solely* desire to disprove Jesus' historical existence. Then in an endnote, C.E. Price refers his reader to a long list of 25 conservative scholars who support partial authenticity as the very evidence that it is somehow, automatically authentic. C.E. Price (2008: 25–26) then goes on to make a common conflation, arguing that it is *not a coincidence* that it is those who deny the existence of Jesus who are "carrying the water against the partial authenticity theory".

A more balanced comment from Fredriksen (2000: 249) claims that the majority of scholars are currently predisposed to see the *TF* as essentially trustworthy, with some later insertions made by Christian scribes.

Charlesworth (1988: 93–94), clearly reflecting his dominant worldview, gladly adheres to the unsubstantiated view that the reader should be assured that originally the *TF* made only a "minimal reference to Jesus". This is

because, when the Christian interpolations are expunged, that which remains "makes good grammatical and historical sense". He then makes the most unusual observation that once the Christian sections have been excised the remaining passage reads better, specifically "the flow of thought is improved and smoother".

Vermes (2010) is also happy to accept this line of reasoning. He is quite content that once the hypothetical Christian interpolations have been removed, what remains is authentic Josephan text. He even tries to argue that the *TF* is in accord with the context of the encapsulating passages which speak to Jewish calamity. Meier (1991: 61) is also content to accept the partially authentic *TF* theory. Unbelievably, he claims that one of the reasons for his acceptance of this theory, is that most of the words that appear in the *TF* also occur elsewhere in Josephus' works! That's like believing that Enid Blyton wrote the *Lord's Prayer* because all her books share some of the same words.

Furthermore, if this was really more or less what Josephus actually wrote, it is strange that he makes no attempt to identify this specific Jesus. Based on the way he introduces other characters called "Jesus" in his works he should have written something like "Now about this time there lived a wise man called Jesus ben Yoshef who hailed from Galilee…"

On this very issue, Meier (1991: 61) makes the most amusing claim that it was because Jesus was so well known that Josephus did not want to insult his reader by explaining who he was! This is quite true, but only for an audience that lived a few centuries later.

Regardless, the problem with most of the *TF* reconstructions is that they still have Josephus referring to Jesus as a "*sophos anêr*" and performing actions which reveal his divinity and defy nature (*paradoxôn ergôn poiêtês*) and apart from winning over *both* Jews and Gentiles is described as a "teacher of the truth".

Rationally speaking, no version of the *TF* can in any way be termed "neutral" and it is certain that no hypothetical Christian reader would have viewed it as being anything but positive. Certainly, based on the hard evidence, Pines' opinion (1971: 21) is pertinent at this juncture. He correctly points out that it is purely the subjective needs of most of these scholars that ensures that the partial authentic theory is maintained.

3.4 Eusebius as the Potential Forger of the *TF*

Introduction

As should be obvious, based on the information reviewed thus far, the very first indication that the *TF* even existed comes solely from a reading of the extant works by Eusebius. This section reviews the various analyses that have been undertaken of the manner in which Eusebius refers to the *TF* in two of his works. This sheds valuable light on his possible role as the forger of the *TF*.

The evidence of *Dem. ev.* and *Hist. eccl.*

To emphasise the point, in Figure 6 (below) is to be found a comparison of the Greek version of the *TF* and the reference to the *TF* by Eusebius as it appears in his *Dem. ev.* III, 5 / 105–106. In a similar way, Figure 7 (below) refers to a comparison of the Greek version of the *TF* and the reference to the *TF* by Eusebius as it appears in his *Hist. eccl*. I, 11. This comparison is loosely based on the work of Zeitlin (cf. 1928: 252–253):

Josephus *Antiquities* 18, 3, 3 / 63–64	**Eusebius *Dem. ev.* III, 5 / 105–106**[212]
Ginetai de kata touton ton chronon Iêsous sophos anêr, eige andra auton legein chrê: ên gar paradoxôn ergôn poiêtês, didaskalos anthrôpôn ***tôn hêdonêi talêthê dechomenôn****, kai pollous men Ioudaious, pollous de kai tou Hellênikou epêgageto: ho christos houtos ên. Kai auton endeixei tôn prôtôn andrôn par' hêmin staurôi epitetimêkotos Pilatou ouk epausanto hoi to prôton*	*Ginetai de kai ekeinon ton chronon Iêsous sophos anêr, eige andra auton legein chrê: ên gar paradoxôn ergôn poiêtês, didaskalos anthrôpôn talêthê debomenôn, kai pollous men tou Ioudaiou, pollous de kai tou Hellênikou epêgageto: ho christos houtos ên. Kai auton endeixei tôn par' hêmin archonton staurôi epitetimêkotos Pilatou ouk epausanto hoi to prôton agapêsantes: ephanê gar*

[212] English translation according to Gifford (Tr.). 1903. *Eusebii Pamphili: Evangelicae Praeparationis, Libri XV, Tomus III:* 187.

agapêsantes: ephanê gar autois tritên echôn hêmeran palin zôn tôn theiôn prophêtôn tauta te kai alla muria peri autou thaumasia eirêkotôn. Eis eti te nun tôn Christianôn apo toude ônomasmenon ouk epelipe to phûlon.	*autois tritên echôn hêmeran palin zôn tôn theiôn prophêtôn tauta te kai alla muria peri autou eirêkotôn. Othen eideti nun apo toude tôn Christianôn ouk epelipe to phûlon.*

Figure 6
A Comparison between the *Antiquities* and *Demonstratio Evangelica* Versions of the *TF*.

The words that appear in *Ant.* but not in Eusebius' *Dem. ev.* are **emboldened**. Additions to Eusebius' text are underscored.

Josephus *Antiquities* 18, 3, 3 / 63–64	**Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* I, 11 / 7 & 8**
*Ginetai de kata touton ton chronon Iêsous sophos anêr, eige andra auton legein chrê: ên gar paradoxôn ergôn poiêtês, didaskalos anthrôpôn tôn hêdonêi talêthê dechomenôn, kai pollous men **Ioudaious**, pollous de kai tou Hellênikou epêgageto: ho christos houtos ên.*	*Ginetai de kata touton ton chronon Iêsous sophos anêr, eige andra auton legein chrê: ên gar paradoxôn ergôn poiêtês, didaskalos anthrôpôn tôn hêdonêi talêthê dechomenôn, kai pollous men tôn Ioudaioun, pollous de kai apo tou Hellênikou epêgageto: ho christos houtos ên.*

Figure 7
A Comparison Between the *Antiquities* and *Historia Ecclesiastica* Versions of the *TF*.

The words that appear in *Ant.* but not in Eusebius' *Hist. eccl.* are **emboldened**. Additions to Eusebius' text are underscored.

Although in terms of content and import the texts are all but identical, Eusebius does not quote the *TF exactly* the same way as it now appears in

Ant. It will be noticed that in *Hist. eccl.* I, 11 / 7 & 8, Eusebius writes "*kai pollous men tôn Ioudaioun, pollous de kai apo tou Hellênikou epêgageto*" whereas Josephus' *TF* renders "*kai pollous men* ***Ioudaious****, pollous de kai tou Hellênikou epêgageto*". As a consequence, at this stage of the argument, we are left with only two logical conclusions:

1. Eusebius had had earlier opportunities (i.e. the *Hier.*), to mention the *TF* but for some unknown reason, remained silent. Suddenly he decided to become the very first Christian apologist to realise that the *TF* as it appeared in his copy of *Antiquities* could be very useful to his mission. He carefully memorised its content. Subsequently without referring to Josephus' text, he paraphrased it, from memory alone, in his *Dem. ev.* and *Hist. eccl.*; or

2. Sometime after writing the *Hier.* (which does not contain a reference to the *TF*), whilst busy with his *Dem. ev.* Eusebius decided to compose a counterfeit Josephan reference to Jesus (which he had obviously committed to memory due to the fact that he was the originator). Subsequent to this action, he inserted this passage from memory into his later *Hist. eccl.* Then, in order to falsely substantiate his fraudulent references he inserted it into his copy/copies of *Ant.*

In this regard, Doherty (2009: 550), with reference to claims by Christian scholars who support the notion of partial authenticity, comments that Eusebius quotes the *TF* (almost) exactly as we have it now, replete with all its positive Christian features. "From Eusebius' time and for the next 13 centuries, no one in Christendom doubted that Josephus had written that Jesus "was the Messiah."

For this reason, it should not be viewed as out of the ordinary that when the *TF* was first questioned by scholars (c. 1500s C.E.) Eusebius was quickly identified as being the likely mastermind behind its creation and insertion into *Ant.*–something that seems to be summarily denied in more contemporary times.

Another angle, already alluded to, and which needs to be explored at this juncture, involves the careful reconsideration of a partial forgery rather than total interpolation. In this regard, Zindler (2003: 58) has contemplated the possibility that Eusebius may have originally come across an earlier form of the *TF* (also manufactured by Christian hands) and further that this version was already inserted in the place where it now resides in *Ant.* In this regard, we should also allow for the possibility that Eusebius may have

come across a small marginal gloss that he chose to "upgrade" and elevate to "main text" status.

After all, there is some evidence that other Christian tampering may well have occurred in other parts of *Ant.* before Eusebius' time so the possibility always exists that an earlier forger had already started the ball rolling. In this unlikely scenario, a previous hand had inserted a possibly shorter version of what was to eventually become known as the *TF*

However, Zindler (2003) also acknowledges that even if this was what in fact happened it is now quite impossible to extricate what is the Eusebian "improvement" from what may have been the original interpolation.

One possible piece of evidence for this possibility relates to the previously discussed usage of the word "*phûlon*" for "tribe" as it is what Doherty (2009: 556) describes as being "so markedly a distant second choice for both Josephus and Eusebius" that perhaps it was originally coined by an earlier (albeit unknown) interpolator.

Despite the seemingly overwhelming circumstantial evidence that points to Eusebius as a potential fraudster, conservative scholars will more typically refuse to give any quarter. For example, C.E. Price (2008: 30) makes various insubstantial refutations of the more sceptical arguments based on the stylistic idiosyncrasies for authorship attribution. In the same vein, he claims that it is simply quite erroneous to think that Eusebius employed the *TF* for some apologetic function. Therefore, more discussion needs to take place here and all the angles explored before assuming anything. In this context, additional evidence is brought to bear by primarily,

Olson (1999: 305–322). He makes a most important observation that, if accurate, gives additional evidence to support the candidacy of Eusebius as the creator of the *TF* in the form that has survived until contemporary times.

As is well-known, in the *TF*, Pilate condemns Jesus on an accusation by "*tôn prôtôn andrôn*" ("the principal/first men" among us). Olson points out that "*prôtôn andrôn*" is found in other works by Josephus but *never* in association with the words "among us". However, this exact phrase (i.e. "*tôn prôtôn andrôn*"), is to be found in various works by Eusebius.

Furthermore, and most importantly, Olson has noticed a discrepancy between the two references made to the *TF* by Eusebius in his *Dem. ev.* and

Hist. eccl. respectively.

Specifically, in his *Hist. eccl.* Eusebius quotes the phrase from the *TF* (apart from some very minor grammatical changes already indicated earlier) exactly as it is known today, i.e. "by the principal men [*prôtôn andrôn*] among us." However, in his *Dem. ev.* (as has been pointed out earlier), the same phrase is reproduced as "from our rulers/leaders [*archonton*]." In this regard, Olson (2000) wonders why Eusebius should quote the same text that he claims that he saw in Josephus' *Ant.* in two different ways.

Explanations obviously include the possibility that he was paraphrasing or merely misquoting from memory, but regardless, Olson cannot believe that, like sacred scripture, Eusebius would have committed this entire passage to enduring memory. Surely, if authentic, he would have copied the quotation directly from his personal copy or copies of the *Antiquities*?

However, to be fair, even Olson (2000) admits that it is widely accepted that most, if not all, ancient writers surely had to rely heavily on their memories since they made use of manuscripts that did not contain convenient indices and/or cross-references to various passages. However, Olson (2000) makes an important observation in this context. Let us assume that Eusebius was not referring directly to the written text in front of him and was attempting to recollect Josephus' wording. In this scenario he had a small memory lapse which accounts for the small discrepancies in the two versions (*Dem. ev.* and *Hist. eccl.*). However, it does not explain how he managed to remember everything else so flawlessly!

It is for this reason that Olson (2000) has considered the very real possibility that on both occasions Eusebius unashamedly composed the *TF*. Originally he created a version of the *TF* when desperately looking for extra-biblical/scriptural support for his claims whilst writing his *Dem. ev.* Whilst busy composing his *Hist. eccl.* Eusebius decided to re-use this interpolation but modify certain of the wording, such as changing "*archonton"* into "*prôtôn andrôn"*.

Olson (2013a: 106) gives us other good evidence for Eusebius being considered the possible author of the *TF* when he highlights Eusebius' own introduction to the suspect passage. Here, Eusebius is engaged in a defence of attacks made against the gospel accounts of the disciples being valid eye-witnesses. Specifically, *immediately* after quoting the *TF* verbatim in his

Dem. ev. III, 5 / 107–109[213] Eusebius states:

> If, then, even the historian's evidence [i.e. Josephus] shews that He attracted to Himself not only the twelve Apostles, nor the seventy disciples, but had in addition many Jews and Greeks, He must evidently have had some extraordinary power beyond that of other men. For how otherwise could He have attracted many Jews and Greeks, except by wonderful miracles and unheard-of teaching? And the evidence of the Acts of the Apostles goes to shew that there were many myriads of Jews who believed Him to be the Christ of God foretold by the prophets. And history also assures us that there was a very important Christian Church in Jerusalem, composed of Jews, which existed until the siege of the city under Hadrian. The bishops, too, who stand first in the line of succession there are said to have been Jews, whose names are still remembered by the inhabitants. So that thus the whole slander against His disciples is destroyed, when by their evidence, and apart also from their evidence, it has to be confessed that many myriads of Jews and Greeks were brought under His yoke by Jesus the Christ of God through the miracles that He performed.

Again in his *Dem. ev.* IV, 10 /14[214] Eusebius states:

> And these by His deeds and words He mightily plagued, while He healed and cured the whole human race with the gentle and kind medicines of His words, and with the tonic of His teaching. He freed them from all sorts of sicknesses and suffering of body as well as soul, He set all that came to Him free from age-long superstition, and the fears of polytheistic error, and from a low and dissolute life ...

Olson (2013a: 106) sees these references as evidence of Eusebius' mind-set and committed message. He wanted to emphasise that huge numbers of people from diverse groups (i.e. Jew and Gentile alike) were acknowledging Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

Those who want to bring in counter-arguments that claim this is Josephan because it makes use of distinctly Josephan-style language are quickly silenced by Olson. He strongly implies that it is a very simple matter to look

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[213] English translation according to Gifford (Tr.). 1903. *Eusebii Pamphili: Evangelicae Praeparationis, Libri XV, Tomus III:* 187–188. English translation according to Ferrar (Tr.). 1920. *The Proof of the Gospel Being the Demonstratio Evangelica of Eusebius of Caesarea*, Vol. I: 143–144.

[214] English translation according to Gifford (Tr.). 1903. *Eusebii Pamphili: Evangelicae Praeparationis, Libri XV, Tomus III:* 233–234. English translation according to Ferrar (Tr.). 1920. *The Proof of the Gospel Being the Demonstratio Evangelica of Eusebius of Caesarea*, Vol. I: 183.].

though Josephus' works for common utterances such as "principal men" and "with pleasure" and then to ingenuously re-use them in a new pro-Christian context.

A final counter-argument to be considered at this juncture is that perhaps Eusebius and others had more than one version of the *Antiquities*; and this was the actual cause of these discrepancies.

Apart from the fact that that possibility would indicate that Eusebius must have owned at least two different versions of the same manuscript it does not explain why both versions have not survived to the present day. Certainly, at the very least, this would prove that Eusebius made sure that only one version of the *TF*–his preferred version–survived to be read by subsequent "unsuspecting" Christian scholars.

The evidence of *Adversus Hieroclem*

Olson (1999: 305–322; 2013a: 97–114) has put forward another convincing argument for Eusebius being the *preferred* forger of the *TF*. Obviously, if this could be unequivocally substantiated it would be the indispensable confirmation that the *TF* is an unmitigated fake. Olson's methodology here, is to compare the *TF* in terms of the language employed by Josephus and Eusebius. As has been reviewed already, the more normal approach by more conservative scholars is to support the partial authenticity of the *TF* and then point out where it supposedly contains Josephan terminology and by default, allegedly non-Christian content.

However, Olson's view is that if one looks at the *entire TF* passage, the language seems to point to none other than Eusebius being the originator. Olson (2000) reminds his reader that Eusebius in fact refers to the *TF* in *three* of his works, i.e. *Dem. ev.*, *Hist. eccl.* (both in Greek), and *Theoph.* (which as has already been mentioned, is only extant in its Syriac form). In all three cases, Eusebius calls upon the *TF*, which he identifies as from Josephus' *Ant.* (i.e. specifically Book 18), as a witness to Jesus' divine and excellent character.

Furthermore, Olson (2000) also points out that there is a work by Eusebius produced only a few years earlier than these three previously mentioned. In this context, our attention is again drawn to the *Adversus Hieroclem.* It will be recalled that Eusebius took issue with *Hierocles*' assertion that Apollonius of Tyana was far superior to Jesus. In addition, the biographer, Philostratus referred to Apollonius as "*sophos*" (translated as "sage"),

which Eusebius seems to have been willing to accept since he refers to Apollonius as "*sophon tina*" ("type of sage"). However, in the case of Jesus, Eusebius employs the superior accolade, viz.: *"theios anêr*" (i.e. "divine man").

What is most informative here is that Eusebius, for some inexplicable reason, yet in accord with the practices of other Christian apologists who came before and in some cases even after him, does not make use of the *TF* when he refutes *Hierocles*.

Doherty (2009: 551) alerts his reader to the fact that for some strange reason, Eusebius did not make use of the *TF* when he wrote his *Hier.* sometime before 303 C.E. What makes this even more peculiar is that in the *Hier.* Eusebius is faced with the task of portraying Jesus in a sympathetic and favourable light. In this context, the *TF* would have proven very useful but Eusebius does not make use of it. Then a few years later he suddenly refers to the *TF* in his *Dem. ev.* (completed before 311 C.E.) and *Hist. eccl.* (published in c. 313 C.E.). If Eusebius did not forge the *TF* in its entirety, then we must naively assume that he accidentally discovered it in another version of *Antiquities*, sometime between 304 and 310 C.E. It is for this reason, that both Olson (1999 and 2013a) and Doherty (2009) believe it is this very interim period within which Eusebius made the decision to make his life easier and compel Josephus say something that would serve a very useful purpose for the Christian cause.

Evidence that Eusebius was capable of duplicity

If it could be proved that Eusebius did have at least a hand in the final version of the *TF* is there much point in criticising him for these actions? After all, one of the central concerns of this book is whether or not Josephus was an eyewitness to an historical Jesus and not an attack on one or more of the early church fathers.

In this regard, a number of scholars have also attempted to ratiocinate Eusebius' agenda as Church historian and apologist. They have tried to determine whether, from his own perspective, he was being entirely fraudulent or whether he was so blinded by his adherence to his belief system that he can only really be accused of over-zealousness and "pious fraud". In short, he, like the conservative scholars of today, perhaps did not see himself as being in any way fraudulent when he encouraged a particular interpretation to satisfy a specific worldview. Furthermore, if individuals are sincerely and firmly convinced of the truth of their particular point of

view, are they committing fraud if they rework or add a text? May we consider them to be malicious if they deliberately force a particular outcome to ensure that others will not follow another path?

On balance, from, say, a Christian perspective, fundamentalist/literalist believers may well feel that it their divine obligation to ensure that others believe what they do to save them the pains of eternal damnation. They may naively want to ensure, at all costs, that nothing stands in the way of the global acceptance of the Christian dogma. Such individuals may even perceive their pious fraud to be an act of saintliness.

What is important about this seeming side-issue is that perhaps Eusebius himself gives a clue as to his state of mind that might shed some light on his ethical stance and whether he would even have been able to commit such a fraudulent act. After all, if Eusebius admits to fraud, in the light of the other acquired evidence, then that should be seen as conclusive proof that suspicious texts (i.e. like the *TF*), are not to be trusted as regards their historical value.

It is already well known that ancient writers exaggerated or embellished their texts. It is also accepted that plagiarism must have been quite common. Lastly it is known that ancient writers did not have quite the same outlook as exists today, as regards stretching the truth to get a particular message across.

As an example, in his *Cels*. IV, 19[215] Origen's states:

> Others may agree with Celsus that He does not change, but makes those who see Him think that he has changed. But we, who are persuaded that the advent of Jesus to men was not a mere appearance, but a reality and an indisputable fact, are unaffected by Celsus' criticism. Nevertheless, we will reply thus: "Do you not say, Celsus, that sometimes it is allowable to use deceit and lying as a medicine? Why, then, is it unthinkable that something of this sort occurred with the purpose of bringing salvation? For some characters are reformed by certain doctrines which are more false than true, just as physicians sometimes use similar words to their patients. This however has been our defence on other points. But further, there is nothing wrong if the person who heals sick friends healed the human race which was

[215] English translation according to Kirby, 2014b. *Origen. Contra Celsus* in *Early Christian Writings*. [Online]. Available: http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/origen164.html [12 September 2014].

> dear to him with such means as one would not use for choice, but to which he was confined by force of circumstances.

Chadwick (1980: 195 n. 4), informs his reader that Celsus is obviously quoting from Plato's *Res Publica,* specifically sections 382C; 389B; 459 C and D. Indeed, *Rep*. 389A and 389B[216] yields:

> "If it pleases you to call it mine," he said; "at any rate we must not accept it." "But further we must surely prize truth most highly. For if we were right in what we were just saying and falsehood is in very deed useless to gods, but to men useful as a remedy or form of medicine, it is obvious that such a thing must be assigned to physicians and laymen should have nothing to do with it." "Obviously," he replied. "The rulers then of the city may, if anybody, fitly lie on account of enemies or citizens for the benefit of the state; no others may have anything to do with it.

Depending on one's point of view this could be construed as evidence that Origen sanctioned deceit if it was for a good cause. In short, the means justified the end. If the salvation of the world is at stake, then it is justified to fabricate or embellish.

What is interesting is that Eusebius openly quotes Origen's sentiments and further in his *Praep. ev.* XII, 31[217] Eusebius first quotes Plato (*Lg.* 663 D), as follows:

> But even if the case were not such as our argument has now proved it to be, if a lawgiver, who is to be of ever so little use, could have ventured to tell any falsehood at all to the young for their good, is there any falsehood that he could have told more beneficial than this, and better able to make them all do everything that is just, not by compulsion but willingly?
>
> Truth, O Stranger, is a noble and an enduring thing; it seems, however, not easy to persuade men of it.

Eusebius then goes on to state:

> Now you may find in the Hebrew Scriptures also thousands of such passages

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[216] English translation (end of *R.* 389A and 389B) according to Shorey (Tr.) 1969. *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vols. 5 and 6 in *Perseus Digital Library* [Online}. Available: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0168%3Abook%3D3%3Asection%3D389b [22 July 2014].

[217] English text according to Gifford (Ed. and Tr.). 1903. *Eusebii Pamphili: Evangelicae Praeparationis, Libri XV, Tomus III*: 607.

> concerning God as though He were jealous, or sleeping, or angry, or subject to any other human passions, which passages are adopted for the benefit of those who need this mode of instruction.
>
> I have repeated whatever may rebound to the glory, and suppressed all that could tend to the disgrace of our religion.

Eusebius seems to be intimating that even the Jews (who he also wants to point out influenced the Ancient Greeks), were not averse to using fiction in their scriptures to get a message across. However, it is difficult to agree with such extreme interpretations as are found in, inter alia, Gibbon,[218] where this kind of statement is used as hard evidence for Eusebius' wholesale endorsement of employing mistruths as long as the end justifies the means. In point of fact, this passage in *Praep. ev.* XII, 31 is open to interpretation and does not comfortably prove anything in itself. At best one might intimate that Eusebius would rather withhold information if it would benefit his belief system.

Often the assertion that Eusebius is condoning the pious employment of falsehood and lies is strengthened by reference to the chapter heading for *Praep. ev.* XII, 31[219]:

> XXXI: That it will be necessary sometimes to use falsehood as a remedy for the benefit of those who require such a mode of treatment.

However, it seems that even this is open to question as the title for the chapter is more than likely more recent than that employed by Eusebius himself. Indeed, at the time of the original composition he is most unlikely to have made use of modern chapters and other, more contemporary conventions. Thus, the choice of a chapter title cannot be laid at his feet.

3.5 Hata's Proof: A Case Study

Introduction

Hata[220] (2007: 91–91) draws our attention to Eusebius' enormous dependency on the writings of Josephus in order to provide his propaganda with the

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[218] Edward Gibbon (1737–1794) author of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–1788).

[219] English text according to Gifford (Ed. and Tr.). 1903. *Eusebii Pamphili: Evangelicae Praeparationis, Libri XV, Tomus III*: 571.

[220] Professor Dr Gohei Hata, Sometime professor at Dropsie University for Hebrew

semblance of legitimacy. Hata's thesis should be seen as valuable supporting evidence when juxtaposed with the various findings of other scholars who suspect Eusebius as being the very author of the *TF*.

Specifically, Hata who has presented his thesis in an essay titled: *The Abuse and Misuse of Josephus in Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History, Books 2 and 3* (2007: 91–102) confirms that Eusebius both "abused and misused" Josephus in order to convey a distinctly anti-Semitic doctrine. In short, a dogma which would subsequently lay the very foundation for the anti-Jewish mind-set that characterised Christianity for well over 1,600 years.

Hata's (2007: 91–92) claim as to the key components of Eusebius' anti-Semitic message may be summarised as follows:

1. Jews were responsible for Jesus' crucifixion;

2. Accordingly, the Jews had committed a crime against Christ;

3. Consequently, the entire Jewish "race" stood accused for all time;

4. Assuredly, God sought compensation from the Jews for their crime; but

5. Simultaneously, God gave the Jews ample time to repent and to accept Christ as Saviour; however

6. Because the Jews did not repent, God destroyed both Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 C.E.

Hata sets out to prove that the works of Josephus are employed as a "form of citation", specifically for clauses 4, 5 and 6 and which appear in his *Hist. eccl.* II and III, 2.

As an aside, Hata (2007: 91) also draws his reader's attention to an alarming fact. Hata quotes from Lawlor and Oulton (1928: 19): "in the History we find nearly 250 passages transcribed from early sources. . . In addition to these there are 90 or 100 indirect quotations or summaries . . .".

In this context, Hata (2007: 92) has calculated that the first three books of the *Hist. eccl.* contain 16 passages from *War*, 13 passages from *Ant.*, one

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and Cognate Learning and professor at Tama Art University in Japan.

passage from *C.Ap.* and another from *Vit.* This translates to more than 12% of the entire *Hist. eccl.* consisting of quoted texts from Josephus. Thus it is fair to state that Eusebius had a thorough knowledge of Josephus' writings.

Certain key highlights of Hata's thesis will now be presented and analysed:

Hist. eccl. II, 1–9

Hata (2007: 92–101) carefully unpacks Eusebius' *modus operandi* (including his heavy reliance on Josephus) to formulate and substantiate the validity of his anti-Semitic propaganda. Hata (2007: 93) informs us that Eusebius demonstrates considerable expertise when composing an account for a specific purpose.

The central points of this process, as initiated in *Hist. eccl.* II, 1 are itemised below in point form:

1. Eusebius employs *Hist. eccl.* II, 1 to describe the apostles' accomplishments and the resultant rapid spread of Christianity after the ascension of Christ;

2. In the process of this narrative, Eusebius (who wants to justify God's retribution against the Jews for their involvement in the slaying of Christ) makes much of a pogrom (*Hist. eccl.* II, 5) that befell the Alexandrian Jews in 37 C.E. In this regard, he refers to Philo and quotes a prolonged episode from *Ant.* 18, 8, 1 / 257–260;

3. With reference to Philo, (*Hist. eccl.* II, 5) Eusebius comments on Sejanus' ruthless actions to annihilate the Jewish nation. He also mentions Pontius Pilate's harassment of the Jews in Jerusalem–the site of the crucifixion of Christ;

4. Eusebius then suddenly changes direction (*Hist. eccl.* II, 6) and returns to the issue of the Alexandrian pogrom. Specifically he gives the distinct impression that this event occurred almost immediately after the crucifixion and accordingly, is proof of divine punishment for Jewish crimes committed against Christ the Saviour;

5. Eusebius (cf. *Hist. eccl.* II, 6 / 8) also manages to move from a local event in Alexandria to the calamitous events that affected the Jews in Jerusalem and Judea. In this way, he manages to emphasise that

the *entire* nation of Jews is being punished by God;

6. What is most important to realise when contemplating Hata's theory is the fact that whilst referring to Pilate's actions in Jerusalem, Eusebius is almost totally reliant for his information on Josephus' *War*–specifically *War*, 2, 9, 2 / 169–170 and 2, 9, 4 / 175–177; and

7. Eusebius compounds the association of "justifiable" Jewish calamity by boldly referring (e.g. *Hist. eccl.* II, 6 / 8) to Josephus' record of countless uprisings which had their origin in Jerusalem and culminated with Vespasian's destruction of the city and the Temple.

However, as Hata confirms, in point of fact, Josephus never did refer to *innumerable* examples of Jewish misfortune. Eusebius has exaggerated the content of Josephus' texts purely to support his own narrative that seeks to substantiate evidence of Divine retribution against the whole Jewish nation. It should also be noted that Eusebius even justifies Pilate's suicide (*Hist. eccl.* II, 7 / 1) and a famine in the time of Claudius (*Hist. eccl.* II, 8 / 1) as evidence of God's retribution.

In *Hist. eccl.* II, 6 / 8[221] Eusebius states:

> Thus the divine vengeance overtook the Jews for the crimes which they dared to commit against Christ.

It is noteworthy that Hata (2007: 93) incorrectly translates this as "Thus the penalty of God pursued the Jews for their crimes against God."

Regardless, Hata (2007: 93) points out that we should give particular consideration to Eusebius' deployment of such phrases as "the penalty of God pursues without delay" (which would be better translated as "the divine vengeance overtook") which in one form or another is repeated often (cf. *War*, 2, 7, 1 / 101–105; 3, 5, 7 / 102–107 etc.).

Hata (2007: 93–94) explains that when ancient writers report that divine retribution befell some city or nation, the reader understands that this is a single event that happened in the past. However, when the text intimates that the Jewish deity will "pursue", it is understood that this retributive event will continue to occur. Furthermore, when the writer inserts an adverb or an

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[221] English translation according to McGiffert (Tr.). 1890. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* 2nd Series, Vol. 1. Revised and edited for New Advent by Knight. [Online]. Available: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250102.htm [8 September 2014].

adverbial phrase (e.g. "without delay") after the verb "pursue" (when referring to divine retribution), the tension between the described event and the reader is heightened. In addition, the reiteration of phrases such as "the penalty of God pursued" intimates that the entire Jewish nation is doomed and will be annihilated. In the same way, Eusebius deliberately alters words or phrases in his narrative to emphasise both his theological and anti-Semitic stance.

Hist. eccl. II, 10

Hata illustrates Eusebius' deviancy, when, with reference to Acts 12: 21–23 he comments on the death of king Herod Agrippa I (11 B.C.E.–44 C.E.). However, when stressing the harmony between this account and the one given by Josephus he initially gives the impression that he has overlooked the fact that *Ant.* is referring to king Herod Agrippa II (a.k.a. *Marcus Iulius Agrippa* (c. 27– 92 C.E.). Eusebius then misquotes *Ant.* 19, 8, 2 / 346 by deliberately swopping the owl (mentioned by Josephus as the omen for Agrippa II's impending death) for an angel. This dishonest action helps to force some suggestion of alignment of Josephus' text with Acts 12: 23[222]:

> Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.

The fact that Eusebius must know that he is deliberately forcing his text is again confirmed when after having just made the necessary connection between *Ant.* and Acts he confidently states in his *Hist. eccl.* II, 10 / 10[223]:

> I marvel greatly that Josephus, in these things as well as in others, so fully agrees with the divine Scriptures. But if there should seem to any one to be a disagreement in respect to the name of the king, the time at least and the events show that the same person is meant, whether the change of name has been caused by the error of a copyist, or is due to the fact that he, like so many, bore two names.

It is significant that having just misused the reference to *Marcus Iulius Agrippa* to establish an alignment between *Ant.* and Acts Eusebius then

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[222] English (NIV) text according to William D. Mounce and Robert H. Mounce, *The Zondervan Greek and English Interlinear New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 508.

[223] English translation according to McGiffert (Tr.). 1890. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* 2nd Series, Vol. 1. Revised and edited for New Advent by Knight. [Online]. Available: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250102.htm [8 September 2014].

unabashedly denies the discrepancy and justifies that the same period of time is indicated. As Eusebius proceeds with his proof of concept he repeatedly aligns personalities and incidents from his two sources in a very casual and non-critical way. Hata (2007: 94) confirms:

> Eusebius naively regards those sources as referring to the same persons and as belonging to the same period. What is important for Eusebius is not the critical analysis of the two sources he uses, but the agreement that seems to exist at first sight between them.

Hist. eccl. II, 11

Another pertinent example cited by Hata (2007: 94) which clearly showcases Eusebius' preferred *modus operandi* concerns his *Hist. eccl.* II, 11 / 1 reference to the Acts 5: 36[224] account of a revolt by Theudas:

> Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him.

Eusebius then immediately backs this account up with a reference to *Ant.* 20, 97–98. Eusebius' quote is taken from *Hist. eccl.* II, 11 / 2[225]:

> While Fadus was procurator of Judea a certain impostor called Theudas persuaded a very great multitude to take their possessions and follow him to the river Jordan.

Hata (2007: 94) correctly notes that the individual named Theudas, as mentioned by Josephus, lived far later (i.e. c. 44–46 C.E.) than the individual with the same name mentioned in Acts.

Again, Eusebius conflates the famine that occurred during Claudius' reign (i.e. 41–54 C.E.) with an account found in Acts 11: 28[226]:

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[224] English (NIV) text according to William D. Mounce and Robert H. Mounce, *The Zondervan Greek and English Interlinear New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 474-5.

[225] English translation according to McGiffert (Tr.). 1890. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* 2nd Series, Vol. 1. Revised and edited for New Advent by Knight. [Online]. Available: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250102.htm [8 September 2014].

[226] English (NIV) text according to William D. Mounce and Robert H. Mounce, *The Zondervan Greek and English Interlinear New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 505.

> One of them [prophets], named Agabus, stood up and through the spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius).

Hist. eccl. II, 12

Eusebius confuses this event with an account in *Hist. eccl.* II, 12 /2 taken from *Ant.* 20, 5, 2 / 101[227]:

> Under these procurators that great famine happened in Judea, in which queen Helena bought corn in Egypt at a great expense, and distributed it to those that were in want, as I have related already.

With reference to *Ant.* 20, 1, 2 / 5 which speaks to the same event, it is only possible to confirm that the famine in *Ant.* (although admittedly, it may have happened during the late reign of Claudius) only affected Judea and not the entire Roman World.

Hata (2007: 95) continues to cite various examples from the *Hist. eccl.* which would certainly be construed as very sloppy research by contemporary standards. In addition, Eusebius, at this stage of his argument needs to prove that James the Just died shortly before the destruction of the Temple (c. 70 C.E.) In this way he can demonstrate to his reader a direct link between James' death and God's divine retribution–in short, cause and effect.

Hist. eccl. II, 19–23

Hata mentions that *War*, 2, 12, 1 / 227 and *Ant.* 20, 5, 3 / 112 both comment on the tumult that resulted in the death of some 20,000 Jews in Jerusalem during Cumanus' governorship (c. 48–52 C.E.). In his *Hist. eccl.* II, 19 / 1 Eusebius indicates that this calamity occurred towards the end of Claudius' reign. Thus he manages to imply that this event took place closer to Nero's reign (52–60 C.E.). Subsequently, Eusebius aligns this to *Ant.* 20, 8, 8 / 180–181 which speaks of events that took place at the end of the governorship

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[227] English translation according to Whiston (Tr.) 1895. *Flavius Josephus. The Works of Flavius Josephus,* in *Perseus Digital Library* [Online]. Available: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0146%3Abook%3D20%3Awhiston+chapter%3D5%3Awhiston+section%3D2 [6 August 2014].

of Felix (52–60 C.E.).

This association is strengthened by an account (*Hist. eccl.* II, 20) of the Sicarii and the assassination of Jonathan the high priest (*War,* 2, 13, 3 / 254–256) and the account (*Hist. eccl.* II, 21) of the false prophet who led 4,000 Sicarii into the desert (*War,* 2, 13, 5 / 261–263); both events which occurred during Felix' governorship of Judea and Nero's reign.

Finally, Eusebius compares these accounts to the narrative in Acts 21: 38[228] where Paul is initially identified by a Roman commander as being the Egyptian false prophet:

> Aren't you the Egyptian who started a revolt and led four thousand terrorists out into the desert some time ago?

It has already been seen that Eusebius falsely explains James the Just's death as the cause for the destruction of the Temple (cf. Table 5). Furthermore, it will be recalled that Eusebius lies to his reader in the *Hist. eccl.* II, 23 / 20[229] claiming that Josephus himself confirms this:

> Josephus, at least, has not hesitated to testify this in his writings, where he says, "These things happened to the Jews to avenge James the Just, who was a brother of Jesus, that is called the Christ. For the Jews slew him, although he was a most just man".

Hata (2007: 95) confirms that Eusebius most likely obtained this reference via a reading of Origen (cf. *Cels.* I, 47).[230] This specific passage, which has already been previously reviewed, is reproduced here for convenience:

> Now this writer [i.e. Josephus], **although not believing in Jesus as the Christ**, in seeking after the cause of the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple, whereas he ought to have said that the conspiracy against Jesus was the cause of these calamities befalling the people, since they put to death Christ, who was a prophet, says nevertheless–being, although against his will, not far from the truth–that these disasters happened to the

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[228] English (NIV) text according to William D. Mounce and Robert H. Mounce, *The Zondervan Greek and English Interlinear New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 554.

[229] English translation according to McGiffert (Tr.). 1890. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* 2nd Series, Vol. 1. Revised and edited for New Advent by Knight. [Online]. Available: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250102.htm [8 September 2014].

[230] English translation according to Kirby, 2014b. *Origen. Contra Celsus* in *Early Christian Writings*. [Online]. Available: http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/origen161.html [23 July 2014].

> Jews as a punishment for the death of James the Just, who was a brother of Jesus (called Christ),–the Jews having put him to death, although he was a man most distinguished for his justice. Paul, a genuine disciple of Jesus, says that he regarded this James as a brother of the Lord, not so much on account of their relationship by blood, or of their being brought up together, as because of his virtue and doctrine. If, then, he says that it was on account of James that the desolation of Jerusalem was made to overtake the Jews, how should it not be more in accordance with reason to say that it happened on account (of the death) of Jesus Christ, of whose divinity so many Churches are witnesses, composed of those who have been convened from a flood of sins, and who have joined themselves to the Creator, and who refer all their actions to His good pleasure.

Hata, seems to treat the *JP* (i.e. as it appears in *Ant.* 20, 9, 1 / 197–203) as an authentic Josephan text. Today, we know that the context for the *JP* is c. 62 C.E (i.e. during the governorship of Festus [c. 59–62 C.E.]). Thus, Hata uses this information to prove that there is a discrepancy of some eight years between the *JP* account of the death of James (c. 62 C.E.) and Eusebius' desired date of c. 69–70 C.E.

However, it has been demonstrated already, that Eusebius could not have been the author of the JP (*James Passage*) and that it must have existed in *Ant.* by his time. In addition, given that the *JP* is quite likely a forgery, it was already placed into the wrong historical context beforehand. This possible misplacement was most likely due to the need to find a suitable context for the interpolation and in addition, the forger responsible may not even have known that the date of the chosen context was out by some eight years.

Therefore, to be fair to Eusebius, Hata is somewhat hasty in condemning him at this point. Eusebius, despite his many failings, may well have treated the passage as an authentic Josephan text. In addition, he probably did not even know that there was a discrepancy of time in this particular instance. If he had, he would also have realised that the time of James' death (as described in the *JP*) conflicted with the popular Christian tradition.

Hist. eccl. II, 26

Hata (2007: 96) describes how Eusebius continues to misuse Josephus in his *Hist. eccl.*. Eusebius summarises an account of Florus' mistreatment of

the Jewish population (*War*, 2, 14, 9 / 306ff) in *Hist. eccl.* II, 26 / 1[231]:

> Josephus again, after relating many things in connection with the calamity which came upon the whole Jewish nation, records, in addition to many other circumstances, that a great many of the most honorable among the Jews were scourged in Jerusalem itself and then crucified by Florus. It happened that he was procurator of Judea when the war began to be kindled, in the twelfth year of Nero.

Immediately afterwards Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* II, 26 / 2)[232] states:

> Josephus says that at that time a terrible commotion was stirred up throughout all Syria in consequence of the revolt of the Jews, and that everywhere the latter were destroyed without mercy, like enemies, by the inhabitants of the cities, so that one could see cities filled with unburied corpses, and the dead bodies of the aged scattered about with the bodies of infants, and women without even a covering for their nakedness, and the whole province full of indescribable calamities, while the dread of those things that were threatened was greater than the sufferings themselves which they anywhere endured. Such is the account of Josephus; and such was the condition of the Jews at that time.

As can be seen, Eusebius based this on a passage from *War*, 2, 18, 2 / 465[233]:

> It was then common to see cities filled with dead bodies, still lying unburied, and those of old men, mixed with infants, all dead, and scattered about together; women also lay amongst them, without any covering for their nakedness: you might then see the whole province full of inexpressible calamities, while the dread of still more barbarous practices which were threatened was every where greater than what had been already perpetrated.

Hata (2007: 96) supports the finding that such Eusebian phrases as "the whole Jewish nation" and "a great many of the most honorable among the

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[231] English translation according to McGiffert (Tr.). 1890. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* 2nd Series, Vol. 1. Revised and edited for New Advent by Knight. [Online]. Available: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250102.htm [8 September 2014].
[232] English translation according to McGiffert (Tr.). 1890. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* 2nd Series, Vol. 1. Revised and edited for New Advent by Knight. [Online]. Available: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250102.htm [8 September 2014].
[233] English translation according to Whiston (Tr.). 1895. *Flavius Josephus. The Works of Flavius Josephus,* in Perseus Digital Library [Online]. Available: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0148%3Abook%3D2%3Awhiston%20chapter%3D18%3Awhiston%20section%3D2 [10 September 2014].

Jews were scourged in Jerusalem itself and then crucified by Florus" are blatant exaggerations:

1. Firstly, Josephus does not indicate such great numbers of Jewish victims from the upper classes; and

2. Secondly, the same incident, as recounted in *War*, 2, 14, 9 / 305–308 specifically states that the number of victims was about 3,600 and also mentions that certain Jews (i.e. not large numbers) who were of the equestrian order were whipped and crucified.

Hata (2007: 96) concludes that Eusebius deliberately exaggerated his figures in order to heighten the tragic aspect and make it seem that a disaster befell the entire Jewish nation. Hata also points out that when Josephus refers to future threats against the Jews he is specifically referring to anti-Jewish attacks which occurred in Alexandria, Ascalon and Scythopolis. Eusebius palpably avoids the true context of Josephus' *War*, 2, 18, 2 / 465 narrative in order to prepare his reader for the tragedy which he is about to relate in *Hist. eccl.* III.

Hist. eccl. III, 1–6

Book III of the *Hist. eccl.* deals with Titus' siege of Jerusalem and the Holy Temple. In this context, Eusebius ensures that his reader is left in no doubt that this cataclysmic event is a just dessert for Jewish culpability. This is clearly spelled out in *Hist. eccl.* III, 5 / 2:[234]

> For the Jews after the ascension of our Saviour, in addition to their crime against him, had been devising as many plots as they could against his apostles. First Stephen was stoned to death by them, and after him James, the son of Zebedee and the brother of John, was beheaded, and finally James, the first that had obtained the episcopal seat in Jerusalem after the ascension of our Saviour, died in the manner already described. But the rest of the apostles, who had been incessantly plotted against with a view to their destruction, and had been driven out of the land of Judea, went unto all nations to preach the Gospel, relying upon the power of Christ, who had said to them, "Go and make disciples of all the nations in my name."

Hata (2007: 97) comments that despite Eusebius' claim that Jews carried

[234] English translation according to McGiffert (Tr.). 1890. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* 2nd Series, Vol. 1. Revised and edited for New Advent by Knight. [Online]. Available: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250105.htm [8 September 2014].

out "numberless plots" he only manages to describe three such cases, viz.:

1. The death of Stephen (Acts 7: 58–60);

2. The death of James, the son of Zebedee (Acts 12: 2); and of course

3. The death of James the Just.

In addition, neither Acts nor Josephus makes mention of Jews devising "as many plots as they could". Based on this finding, Hata (2007: 97) explains that because Eusebius was perfectly assured that no average reader would check his exaggerated facts and safely impart the desired interpretation that the wicked Jews were deservedly punished in 70 C.E. by a righteous and vengeful God.:

Certainly, after Eusebius has exaggerated the enormous degree of mischievous Jewish scheming against the Christian apostles he goes on to present a narrative involving Christians who had to flee from Jerusalem to Perea shortly before the start of the Jewish war. It is also understood that this passage (*Hist. eccl.* III, 5 / 3)[235] may well be inspired by the writings of *Hegesippus*:

> But the people of the church in Jerusalem had been commanded by a revelation, vouchsafed to approved men there before the war, to leave the city and to dwell in a certain town of Perea called Pella. And when those that believed in Christ had come there from Jerusalem, then, as if the royal city of the Jews and the whole land of Judea were entirely destitute of holy men, the judgment of God at length overtook those who had committed such outrages against Christ and his apostles, and totally destroyed that generation of impious men.

Hata (2007: 97) points out that Eusebius is making many assumptions in this narrative (*Hist. eccl.* III, 5 / 3). Indeed, he deliberately misleads the reader into assuming that those Christians who fled to Perea were in some way saintly individuals. Here, the holy Christians serve as a deliberate contradistinction to the wicked generation of Jews.

Perhaps the most overt example of Eusebius' dishonesty is encapsulated in

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[235] English translation according to McGiffert (Tr.). 1890. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* 2nd Series, Vol. 1. Revised and edited for New Advent by Knight. [Online]. Available: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250105.htm [8 September 2014].

Hist. eccl. III, 5 / 5–6[236] where he deliberately creates a false impression of divine retribution against the Jews on a truly exponential scale by assiduously misrepresenting Josephus:

> But it is necessary to state that this writer records that the multitude of those who were assembled from all Judea at the time of the Passover, to the number of three million souls, were shut up in Jerusalem "as in a prison," to use his own words.
>
> For it was right that in the very days in which they had inflicted suffering upon the Saviour and the Benefactor of all, the Christ of God, that in those days, shut up "as in a prison," they should meet with destruction at the hands of divine justice.

Hata (2007: 98) draws our attention to the fact that Josephus is not only the sole source for his diatribe, he is also misquoted. In *War*, 6, 9, 3 / 420–426 Josephus gives tallies of all those Jews who were casualties during the war period. In this context Josephus informs his reader of the following:

1. Number of Jewish captives: 97,000; and

2. Number of Jews who perished during the siege: 1,100,000. Josephus is careful to mention that this figure *includes* Jews who were not resident in Jerusalem but who were there purely for the Passover festival and suddenly found themselves trapped (shut up) inadvertently by the Roman army.

Based on the number of sacrifices (i.e. 256,500) offered by the priests during the festival Josephus guesses that Jerusalem hosted some 2,700,200 persons who were *eligible* to make sacrifice. Thus, this considerable estimate must have also *excluded* women who were in *niddah,* a man who was a *ba'al keri,* lepers etc.

Clearly, Josephus has greatly overestimated the numbers. Hata (2007: 98) feels that this was done in order to gratify Vespasian and Titus. Whiston (1895)[237] also takes issue with these embellished figures and comments in a

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[236] English translation according to McGiffert (Tr.). 1890. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* 2nd Series, Vol. 1. Revised and edited for New Advent by Knight. [Online]. Available: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250105.htm [10 September 2014].

[237] Whiston (Tr.) 1895. *Flavius Josephus. The Works of Flavius Josephus,* in *Perseus Digital Library* [Online]. Available: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0148%3Abook%3D6%3Awhiston%20chapter%3D9%3Awhiston%20section%3D3 [10

footnote:

> The whole multitude of the Jews that were destroyed during the entire seven years before this time, in all the countries of and bordering on Judea, is summed up by Archbishop Usher, from Lipsius, out of Josephus, at the year of Christ 70, and amounts to 1,337,490. Nor could there have been that number of Jews in Jerusalem to be destroyed in this siege, as will be presently set down by Josephus, but that both Jews and proselytes of justice were just then come up out of the other countries of Galilee, Samaria, Judea, and Perea and other remoter regions, to the passover, in vast numbers, and therein cooped up, as in a prison, by the Roman army, as Josephus himself well observes in this and the next section, and as is exactly related elsewhere, B. V. ch. 3. sect. 1 and ch. 13. sect. 7.

Eusebius clearly ignores the fact that Josephus' calculations–apart from being inflated–apply to the entire seven-year period of the war and not a single incident. Hata (2007: 98) generously feels that it is Josephus who should be responsible ultimately for any error of interpretation, since his own exaggerations merely assisted Eusebius in his mission. Regardless, by employing Josephus in such a non-critical way, Eusebius efficaciously creates the impression that admissibly and justifiably, God had managed to chastise almost the entire Jewish nation on one grand occasion.

Hata (2007: 98–99) points out that based on a reading of *War*, 6, 10, 1 / 435 it is possible to calculate that Jerusalem fell to Vespasian on 26th September 70 C.E. Regardless, this tragic Passover incident, which elicited Josephus' exaggerated calculations in *War*, 6, 420–426 occurred shortly before the fall of Jerusalem. Therefore, irrespective of whether this event occurred in c. 68 C.E. or 70 C.E. it certainly did not occur *immediately* after the passion and crucifixion of Jesus in c. 33 C.E.

Hata (2007: 99) refers to Schreckenberg and Schubert (1992: 69) who confirm that Eusebius employs Josephus' Passover calamity in a very non-critical manner merely to give the distinct impression that the catastrophe that occurred at the Passover festival (*War*, 6, 420–426) was directly related to the passion of Christ. Furthermore, Eusebius deliberately fails to mention the specific details of the Jews' tribulations in his *Hist. eccl.* III, 5 / 7:[238]

September 2014].

[238] English translation according to McGiffert (Tr.). 1890. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* 2nd Series, Vol. 1. Revised and edited for New Advent by Knight. [Online]. Available: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250105.htm [10 September 2014].

> But passing by the particular calamities which they suffered from the attempts made upon them by the sword and by other means, I think it necessary to relate only the misfortunes which the famine caused, that those who read this work may have some means of knowing that God was not long in executing vengeance upon them for their wickedness against the Christ of God.

Hist. eccl. III, 7

In *Hist. eccl.* III, 7 / 6[239] Eusebius states:

> If any one compares the words of our Saviour with the other accounts of the historian concerning the whole war, how can one fail to wonder, and to admit that the foreknowledge and the prophecy of our Saviour were truly divine and marvellously strange.

Thus Eusebius emphasises that the "prophecy of our Saviour" agrees with Josephus' numerous narratives. He also implies that Jesus foretold of those events ultimately recorded by Josephus.

Hata (2007: 100) believes that the recurrent references to Josephus indicate that Eusebius possibly thought he shared a form of a kinship with him. Specifically, Eusebius believed that he and Josephus enjoyed similar perceptions of God and/or how God's divine plan manifested in history. Hata (2007: 100–101) substantiates this view as follows:

1. The term "*theos"* occurs 192 times (singular form) in *War;*

2. According to Josephus, the *theos* only resides within the Jerusalem Temple if both the Temple and Jerusalem are ritualistically clean;

3. If contaminated, the *theos* moves out of the Temple;

4. The *theos* is employed to indicate the Jewish deity–the God who directs human history;

5. It is the *theos* who has built up the immense Roman Empire (*War* 2, 16, 4 / 390; 5, 9, 3 / 367–8);

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[239] English translation according to McGiffert (Tr.). 1890. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* 2nd Series, Vol. 1. Revised and edited for New Advent by Knight. [Online]. Available: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250103.htm [10 September 2014].

6. It is the *theos* who has placed the dominion of the world into the hands of the Roman emperor (*War* 3, 8. 9 / 404).

Thus, Hata (2007: 101) theorises that perhaps Josephus justifies what has happened to the Jewish people–however negative–as a divinely sanctioned plan that will ultimately conclude with some form of divine resolution and ultimate justice for his people. By way of example, Josephus clearly justifies the hegemony of the Romans by emphasising the following:

1. The Jewish deity's seeming support for the Romans (*War*, 2, 16, 4 / 390; *War*, 3, 10, 2 / 484; *War*, 4, 6, 2 / 366; *War*, 5, 9, 4 / 378; *War*, 6, 1, 5 / 38–40 and *War*, 6, 9, 1 / 411) which is manifested in numerous ways (*War*, 3, 7, 31 / 293; *War*, 3, 10, 4 / 494; *War*, 4, 2, 3 / 104; *War*, 4, 6, 1 / 362; *War*, 4, 6, 2 / 366; *War*, 4, 9, 11 / 573; *War*, 5, 1, 6 / 39; *War*, 5, 2, 2 / 60; *War*, 5, 8, 2 / 343; and *War*, 7, 8, 5 / 318–19);

2. The Jewish deity's physical departure from the Holy Temple due to its defilement (*War*, 2, 12, 5 / 239; *War*, 5, 9, 4 / 412–413; and *War*, 6, 2, 4 / 127);

3. The Jewish deity's desire to see Jerusalem condemned to destruction and the Temple purified by fire (*War*, 4, 5, 2 / 323; and 6, 2, 1 / 110); and

4. The Jewish deity's request to have the Jews delivered to the Romans (*War,* 4, 6, 2 / 370).

Conclusions

Hata's thesis is aimed at proving the primary source for anti-Semitism in the Christian Church. Inadvertently, he also manages to highlight two distinct pieces of evidence that are of great importance to my investigation:

1. Despite Hata's occasional error of analysis, he has still provided more than enough hard evidence to show that Eusebius has great respect for Josephus and relies heavily on his writings. This is either because he has some genuine affinity for his work or more likely because he knows that Josephus, apart from having a treasure house of data to exploit, commands such respect that he is an invaluable tool for substantiating the validity of his own propaganda.

2. Hata has shown beyond any doubt that Eusebius, for whatever reason, is not to be trusted when he employs an authority like Josephus to substantiate a particular argument. Eusebius is quite capable on occasion, of brazen dishonesty and hyperbole to obtain his goals.

It is safe to state that for Eusebius, the end justifies the means.

3.6 Barnett's Proof (A): A Case Study

No doubt because of the author's unswerving faith in his personal belief system, he has no real reason to doubt the assumptions made by his fellow Christian scholars who have also naively assumed, inter alia, that most of what is found in the writings of Josephus is by his hand. In this regard, they are unlikely to find any direct fault with anything recorded by the early Christian Church or Christian apologists like Origen, Eusebius etc.

They will also, presuppose, largely without critical question, the oft-repeated view that the early Christians were consistently the poor victims of Roman oppression as well as being severely persecuted by non-believers and misinformed "pagans" and that through the divine power of the Holy Spirit their "true" faith finally triumphed when it became the official belief system of the entire Roman Empire.

Within this constructed worldview, estimated dates for the various books ultimately canonised as the *NT* are always, and without exception, given the oldest possible date. Certainly, it would be difficult to find any conservative Christian scholar who would in any way favour the latest possible date for any *NT* book or gospel.

Barnett (2009: vii–viii) is no exception. He declares that the early Christians were not guilty of transforming a "lesser figure" (i.e. an historical Jesus as possible Jewish Rabbi or social reformer), into a deity. Rather, Jesus was in fact the "Christ" and was always fully aware of his role: "On historical grounds I will argue that the early Christians were neither mistaken nor willful, but that the pre-resurrection Jesus believed he was the 'One who was to come,' and that the disciples also came to this conviction."

Barnett (2009: viii), also finds no problem in viewing his "evidence" through the eyes of personal faith. He states: "I engage in this project [to recover the historical Jesus] as one who belongs to the 'household of faith,' although my approach aims to be historical rather than theological."

Despite his unwillingness (intentional or unwitting) to step outside his comfort zone and deal with issues more objectively, he does have the short term honesty to acknowledge that his subjectivity may well be viewed as problematic (cf. Barnett, 2009: 7).

What is very revealing about this forthright acknowledgment of subjectivity is that Barnett does not see that this obviously flawed approach will exacerbate any attempt to access any degree of truth regarding an historical personage called Jesus, who it is assumed was the founder of Christianity.

In point of fact, in his 2009 book entitled: *Finding the Historical Christ* (a title that incidentally clearly embodies his bias), Barnett does not manage to attain any honesty but merely adheres largely to the accepted "party line" by making deductions and pronouncements which merely bolster his constructed worldview and belief system.

For the purposes of my research, Barnett's employment of Josephus is highly informative as regards the dominance of his constructed worldview. Indeed, one can determine by virtue of his very argument what he takes for granted, and what less-cherished aspect of his worldview he is grudgingly prepared to risk to critical dissection:

Barnett (2009: 8) obediently views both the gospels and the writings of Josephus as historically accurate and, based on his particular "research" into Jewish-Roman relations (c. 63 B.C.E. to c. 74 C.E.) and his personal visits to Israel and Jordan, he happily deems his understanding of the origins of Christianity to be "readily imaginable".

Certainly, in the case of Josephus he confirms that he (2009: 8) treats the extant texts attributed to this Jewish scholar as being valid "primary sources". He also pays more than lip service to the writings of Tacitus and Pliny which as we have already ascertained, are more normally criticised by serious scholars as being either suspect (evidence of interpolation) and/ or worthless (e.g. accounts based on hearsay), when it comes to ascertaining the actual existence of an historical Jesus.

Despite this well-known circumspection by other prominent scholars, Barnett gives no inkling to his reader that certain important reservations even exist and certainly, regardless of his intentions, he has no personal misgivings whatsoever as regards his unsubstantiated pronouncements. He merely confirms that their import is in total accord with the *NT* (which he incidentally does not seem to question either) as regards an accurate picture of both the early Church as well as the Julio-Claudian period. In this context,

Barnett (2009: 8) confirms that through the eyes of Tacitus and Pliny we see, inter alia, "Christ" executed in Judea by Pilate and Christians martyred in Rome under Nero. Thus, Tacitus and Pliny confirm the New Testament concerning the origin, spread, and religious practices of early Christianity.

It is noteworthy that Barnett does not even bother to refer to the object of his research as, say, "Jesus", "*Yeshua*" or even the "Nazarene". Instead, he confidently and without question, not only proclaims the existence of a person who has yet to be confirmed in any extra-biblical/scriptural source as the "Christ", but intimates that he was God himself. This is hardly objective and far from his earlier promise of wanting to seek "attainable honesty".

It is a commonly held assumption that the gospel accounts were written down some years after an oral tradition had been established. This oft-repeated conjecture goes further and strongly intimates that the oral tradition (as yet unproven) was based on eyewitness accounts of an historical Jesus. Although this is a reasonable possibility (assuming that an historical Jesus or proto-Jesus actually existed), it does not address other equally plausible possibilities, inter alia, that the Jesus cult was established by other, equally plausible means, and further may not have needed to have been based on the life and mission of an actual person.

By way of but one possibility, it is feasible to explain the creation of the various gospel accounts as part of an extended process whereby metaphoric concepts employed in earlier Jewish assemblies became increasingly literalised in later more gentile circles. For example, the Jewish deity was (and still is) often referred to as the saviour by Jews and the Jewish term for saviour is *Yeshua*. *Yeshu* and *Yeshua* were also, coincidentally, very common Jewish names. In this scenario, the possibility exists that a fictitious character called *Yeshua* was created over time by more gentile communities, equally influenced by Egyptian, Greek and Roman cults, lost sight of the original metaphoric meaning of the term and inadvertently gave rise for the need to envision a flesh and blood god man called *Yeshua*/*Yeshu* or Jesus complete with a genealogy, nativity myth and potted biography.

This one possibility is merely presented here to illustrate an important point. The only evidence that someone called *Yeshua or Yeshu* (i.e. the hypothetical Jesus the Nazarene) walked the earth some two thousand years ago is to be found in a limited number of often contradictory, blatantly pseudepigraphical narratives. Some of these were more gnostic in nature and were themselves suppressed by early literalist Christian groups as being

pseudepigraphical and apocryphal.

Furthermore, the subjective selection and ultimate canonisation[240] of but four of these more literalist gospels was largely due to strong Roman Imperial machination. This was undertaken despite the fact that these four gospels, apart from select pericopes, possibly derived from an earlier common source or sources, still fail to fully corroborate each other.

Regardless, as a result of the subsequent dominance of Christianity as a worldview on Western civilization for the past 1800 years or so, we find modern scholars, raised with all the benefits of modern scientific enquiry and methodologies, who appear to be quite incapable of considering anything but the official party line. Barnett clearly falls into this characterisation as he does not seem to overtly consider other possibilities. Here alone, Barnett infers the following unsubstantiated assumptions:

1. The Christian tradition is totally beyond reproach; it does not need to be subjected to the rigours of modern scientific inquiry and is self-evidently true in every aspect;

2. Jesus not only existed; he was divine, if not God himself, and actually rose from the dead despite the scientific impossibility of such an action ever taking place;

3. There was an oral tradition concerning *bona fide* first-hand accounts of Jesus and his activities ever before there was a written tradition;

4. Jesus was an actual person who had a real life on earth and all accounts in the gospels accurately record precise biographical aspects of that existence; and

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[240] The specific books and gospels that inform the modern Christian New Testament were established over many centuries. Some of the books may have had some established and/or regional authority by the late second century C.E. There may have been an attempt at formal canonisation at the Council of Laodicea in c. 363-4 C.E. but this cannot be proven beyond a doubt. The first formal, conciliar definition of the Catholic Church's Biblical canon would have to wait until 382 C.E. (Council of Rome). It should be noted that the seventh century *Muratorian Canon*, which only refers to two of the four gospels, seems to be based on an earlier Greek version and *might* date anytime from c. 180 C.E. to c. 200 C.E. (Cf. Kirsch, 1911); "Council of Rome", in *Textus Receptus* [Online]. Available: http://textus-receptus.com/wiki/Council_of_Rome [4th May 2020].

5. Jesus was the anointed one or Messiah.

At no time does Barnett seem to be aware that his statements and his "methodology" are completely irrational, illogical and unscientific. In effect, he is saying something like "My belief system/worldview/ constructed reality is beyond reproach and needs no justification. The onus is on you to prove otherwise."

When it comes to the *TF,* Barnett seems to confirm the obvious suspicion that certain scholars, especially those who have a personal commitment to their belief system, will tend to agree with the majority view of like-minded researchers. This no doubt offers a false sense of security in numbers.

The assumption that seems to be made here is that, if the majority of scholars are convinced of something being true, then the chances are that it so. Barnett (2009: 48–49), like many other so-called moderate scholars, holds that, although someone between the time of Origen and Eusebius most likely did make some amendments to Josephus to give rise to what scholars today read as the *TF*, originally Josephus had in fact written down something about Jesus as an historical reality. As is well known, various, normally more moderate, Christian scholars, (i.e. those who admit to a degree of interpolation), have reproduced what they believe the *TF* must have looked like *before* it was amended to appear as it does today. Possibly the most famous version being the one proffered by Vermes.

For accuracy, the theoretical, pre-interpolation version favoured by Barnett is backed up by a text found in Agapius' *Book of the Title*[241]. In this context, the critical phrases: "if indeed one could call him a man" and "he was the Christ" are absent. However, the phrase "he appeared to them three days after his crucifixion … alive" still features.

The version that Barnett (2009: 49) accepts, is reproduced below:

> About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man. For he was one who wrought surprising feats and was a teacher of such people who accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the so-called Christ. When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing amongst us, had condemned him to be crucified, those who had in the first place come to love him did not give up their affection for him. And the tribe of Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared.

[241]Cf. Pines, 1971*:* 4–87.

Barnett, like many other Christian scholars, clearly places his faith in his constructed reality that originally Josephus *must have* said something about Jesus. However, he is equally aware that hard evidence exists that proves that an unknown degree of Christian interpolation definitely occurred in the *Antiquities*. Thus, Barnett has to resort to painting a rather concocted and certainly convoluted picture, that will allow him to address and subsequently deflect the charges of Christian forgery, whilst still leaving him with a nifty (albeit amended and even shorter version of the *TF*), but which is still conveniently able to support his unconditional belief in the historical existence of Jesus.

Barnett, knowing that if Josephus did write the *TF* (albeit in an earlier form) he would still have had to have been uncharacteristically complimentary towards Jesus given his normal scathing attitude towards all other Jewish sages or self-proclaimed holy men. Thus, Barnett makes use of that hoary old chestnut that tries to convince the reader that in fact the *TF* is in fact *not* out of character and is being quite neutral if not negative.

To undertake this sleight of hand and literally force the text to yield a more pessimistic flavour, Barnett (like so many before him) draws attention to the Greek verb *epêgageto* won over), which he falsely claims "in its middle verb form" is normally intended by Josephus to be somewhat negative. With reference to Chilton and Evans (1998: 470–471) who takes a similar stance, Barnett (2009: 50), translates *epêgageto* as "bring something upon someone, mostly something bad".

Next, Barnett would have his reader interpret "For he was one who wrought surprising feats and was a teacher of such people who accept the truth gladly." as evidence that Jesus is presented by Josephus as deceiving the gullible. He then goes on to strongly intimate that the reason why Josephus uncharacteristically does not choose to condemn Jesus as he does with every other messianic claimants is because Jesus did not bring calamity upon the Jewish people. Even at this point in Barnett's argument, there are glaring inconsistencies in basic logic. The main issue against the *TF* (regardless of its assumed original form) is that it is sandwiched between two very elaborate accounts of serious calamities that befell the Jewish people. Certainly, the two accounts are also introduced as typical examples of highly negative occurrences. The uncomfortable appearance of even a neutral account, which is uncharacteristically cryptic in nature, is highly suspicious. Therefore, Barnett needs to show his reader that the suspected interpolation is in keeping with:

1. the broader context of the other highly negative and elaborate material that encases it; and

2. Josephus' normal hostility towards Jewish wonderworkers.

He ends up doing neither, since he is still forced to admit to the obvious positivity of the suspected interpolation (e.g. Jesus was a wise man and loved by his followers who still exist to the present day) which simultaneously proves that it is totally out of context because no calamity of the Jewish people is ever intimated.

Specifically, Barnett first tries to convince his reader that the use of the verb *epêgageto* is to be seen in a solely negative light and then goes on to contradict himself by attempting to prove to his reader that Josephus is quite positive to Jesus because he did not kill anyone. Surely, Barnett cannot have it both ways?

As has been discussed earlier, another more obvious reason why the *TF* is suspected of being a forgery is that it so succinctly reproduces and confirms Christian dogma and confession of the faith, including the anti-Semitic propaganda which normally involves wicked Jewish priests encouraging a mild-mannered Pilate to unwillingly administer the death penalty. Unbelievably, Barnett (2009: 50) turns this notion around and claims that the *TF* is authentic precisely because it so accurately repeats the gospel's exhortations!

Barnett also has some very idealistic notions about Ancient Roman justice. Assuming for a moment that a Jewish rabbi had been presented for punishment to Roman authorities in the early first century C.E. by disgruntled members of the *Sanhedrin*, it is highly unlikely that the Romans would have spent much time debating legal niceties when intent on permanently removing an individual whom they considered to be a threat to civic order. Certainly, it is highly doubtful that the Roman authorities would have been too concerned regarding an individual's personal ethics, his religious convictions or his political persuasion.

In this context, the following observations are pertinent:

Firstly, the Greek term that is translated as "Christ" is normally assumed to be derived from the Hebrew concept of "Messiah" or "Anointed One" and which originally referred to a person who had been anointed with oil as a confirmed agency of God to fulfil his sacred function, inter alia, as a priest,

a king or even a military leader. As we have already confirmed, many commentators have pointed out that the very employment of the term "Christ" by Josephus is highly suspicious because its later Christian connotation of being applicable to a pharaonic/Greek godman. Here, I am referring to the literal incarnation of a supreme deity–one who intercedes for all humankind. Such a notion would have been quite alien to Jesus' historical, religious and social context.

Secondly, even if Josephus (c. 97 C.E.) was somehow aware of this uncharacteristically precocious employment of the "Christ" epithet, he could not possibly have meant "King of the Jews". If he had written about a Jewish wonder worker and further he was aware of Jesus' claims to be a temporal sovereign, it would in fact be yet an additional reason to question seriously the positive spin found in the *TF*.

Thirdly, if one pushes aside logic and naively accepts that Josephus was:

1. aware of the term "Christ"; and

2. fully aware of its religious significance to early Christians,

then one must also assume that Jesus was condemned to death on purely religious grounds (i.e. according to the *TF* as opposed to the gospel accounts). Thus the *TF* would not be in accord with the gospel accounts as Barnett claims.

3.7 Van Voorst's Proof: A Case Study

With the preceding debates in mind it is instructive to present at this point, another case study. Specifically, Olson's (2013) recent review[242] of the arguments of a leading Christian scholar, Van Voorst, who is perhaps one of the more erudite spokespersons of the partial authenticity camp. Indeed, he has possibly been the most successful in presenting a plausible case for determining an authentic Josephan foundation for the essential aspects of the extant *TF* passage.

This is important, because Van Voorst (2000), unlike Barnett, clearly attempts to approach the issue rationally and tries to distance himself from

[242] Olson recently appeared as a guest contributor on the well-known, fairly balanced, *Jesus Blog* spot hosted by Le Donne and Keith. Here he offered criticism of Van Voorst's book (cf. Van Voorst, 2000). Olson, 2013.

his faith in an attempt to be as objective as possible. Van Voorst claims to be arriving at his deductions by stint of logic and not personal agenda. However, as will become quickly self-evident, even Van Voorst cannot escape the pitfalls of embracing and defending his constructed reality, which quickly collapses when confronted by Olson's genuinely rational response.

Certainly, Van Voorst is also fully aware of all the preceding arguments that have been put forward by, inter alia, more liberal and critical scholars. Van Voorst is even, as it were, pre-warned of the dangers that he faces in making certain assertions. Regardless, most would accept that he very skilfully presents the conservative Christian case (his personal worldview), refutes the previously arrived at summations (perceived threat to his worldview) and then attempts to retain the majority of the *TF* as an authentic Josephan text (necessary for the continuation of his constructed reality).

However, as has been so expertly confirmed by, Olson (2013), when these assertions are countered in the light of the constructed worldview of more liberal scholars, the refutations simultaneously highlight Eusebius as the very forger of the *TF*.

The basic outlines of his proffered argument (cf. Van Voorst, 2000: 89–90) are paraphrased (with some amplification) below, for fairness and balanced argument:

1. Jesus is merely referred to as a "*sophos anêr*" ("wise man"), which, despite its positive allusions does not go nearly far enough to satisfy what a Christian forger would have wanted to have expressed about an individual (i.e. Jesus of Nazareth), who he considered to be "*ho Christos*" and the incarnation of the living God. Furthermore, the idiom: "*sophos anêr*" should be seen as unusual in a distinctly Christian context. Notice that Van Voorst assumes that he knows exactly what a first-century Christian writer would be thinking.

2. Jesus is only spoken of as "*paradoxôn ergôn poiêtês*" ("a worker of wondrous/startling/controversial deeds"). Although highly flattering, the idiom would not have satisfied an early Christian forger due to its possible "ambiguity" and mere inference that Jesus was nothing more than a magician or faith-healer rather than being the Supreme Deity and divine performer of miracles.

3. Jesus is labelled as being a teacher of people who "accept the truth with pleasure." For this reason, Van Voorst feels that an early Christian apologist would have been uncomfortable associating a term such as "*hedone*" with its allusions to "sensual pleasure" and hedonism with Jesus and/or his followers.

4. An early Christian apologist, well-versed in gospel literature would never have represented Jesus as winning over "both Jews and Greeks" because the *NT* (which he guilelessly assumes is reliable from an historical perspective!) presents a different scenario.

5. The statement "Those who had first loved him did not cease [doing so]" is:
   a. typically, Josephan in style; and
   b. clearly demonstrates that the author believed that the religion or cult (now known as Christianity) survived after Jesus' death solely because his adherents *loved* him.

   Van Horst argues that a typically Christian forger would rather have stressed that Jesus' devotees focused their continued faith on the sole basis of Jesus' death and divine *resurrection* and not merely on their loving attachment to him as faithful devotees.

6. An early Christian writer would have been somewhat apprehensive concerning the employment of the term "*phûlon*" (tribe) when referring to fellow members of the Christian faith. Specifically, Van Voorst believes that the term "*phûlon*" has distinctly constricted and individualistic connotations which do not correspond to Christianity's manifestly *all-embracing* mission. Here we witness a glaring lack of logic, as Van Voorst's fourth claim requires our previous acceptance of what now becomes an antithetical state of affairs, viz.: the early Christians were not trying to convert both Jew and Gentile.

According to Olson (2013) each one of the hypotheses posited by Van Horst *cannot* be dismissed easily as they are formulated by him. However, the six assertions should in fact be quite erroneous except that due to the "qualified way they are stated (in terms of what is usual, general or common)" they permit Van Voorst to accommodate "an unspecified number of exceptions".

Olson (2013) successfully demonstrates that since each exclusion is identified and produced as evidence, so do the stated premises, as tendered by Van Voorst, exponentially lose their veracity. And, more importantly, in each case it is Eusebius of Caesarea who is ultimately highlighted as the

glaring exception.

Specifically, Olson's (2013) counter claims are explained below:

1. Eusebius, who typically signifies the personage of Jesus as "our Saviour and Lord" also makes reference to him as "*sophos anêr*" (a wise man) in the *Prophetic Eclogues* (PG 22, 1129) which successfully counters Van Voorst's first claim that this accolade does not go far enough to describe Jesus from a Christian perspective. Furthermore, it is also important to take note that certain non-Christian writers at the time, such as the philosopher Porphyry and the oracles of Apollo and Hecate also refer to Jesus as being "a wise man", no doubt as a disclaimer to his having any divine connotations but still admitting that he:

    a. existed; and

    b. should at least be viewed as being an important personage (albeit mortal).

    Some scholars also theorise that Eusebius (as the suspected forger of the *TF*), used the interpolated text to make a pointed reference to Christ as being "more than a wise man" as a means to counter the then distinctly non-Christian view that Jesus was merely mortal. If so, this clearly flies in the face of Van Voorst's suppositions. Certainly a contemporary Christian apologist such as Lactantius (*Divine Institutes* 4. 13. 11–17) and, slightly later, Augustine (*De Civitate Dei*, 19. 23) both employed the self-same tactic, by pointing out in their respective writings that although the oracles of Apollo and Hectate correctly referred to Jesus as a "wise man" they failed to mention his divine status.

2. Olson (2013) argues that whilst the specific formulation "*paradoxôn ergôn poiêtês*" (worker of amazing deeds) is only to be found once (i.e. the *TF*) in any claimed works by Josephus, it should be seen as highly significant that it appears many times in the works of Eusebius and–most pointedly–when describing either Christ or God. Thus, clearly, this specific idiom would have satisfied an early Christian apologist and suspected forger.

    Olson clarifies his position on this issue by pointing out that Van Horst's claim, viz.: the phrase formulation "*paradoxôn ergôn*

poiêtês" is "ambiguous"; reveals a much larger problem of interpretation. Specifically *paradoxôn ergôn poiêtês* might seem somewhat equivocal to a contemporary (predominantly Christian) audience who supposed that it was written by a first century, non-Christian, Jewish historian (i.e. Josephus). However, if the expected context is changed, and the modern interpreter believes that the text was written by, say, Eusebius, it would not be considered in any way confusing.

Olson (2013) gives two examples where Eusebius does use the phrase and where contemporary interpreters do not find the idiom at all ambiguous, viz.: when Eusebius describes the Logos of God in the *Hist. eccl.* I, 2 / 23 and when portraying God himself in the panegyric *Vit. Const.* (*Vita Constantini*), 1, 18, 2.

Thus, it is clear that Eusebius for one, did not feel the need to avoid this particular idiom in case it was misconstrued.

3. Olson (2013) reminds his readers that the early church fathers (including Eusebius) were quite able to distinguish between good and bad kinds of pleasure, and thus refutes Van Voorst's third claim. For example, Eusebius praises the Christian martyrs who went to their deaths "with pleasure" in the *Martyrs of Palestine* 6.6 and *In Praise of Constantine* 17. 11. He also employs the term "pleasure" to qualify the type of rejoicing experienced by the faithful when seated in the presence of God in the world to come (cf. Psalm 67).

   Olson (2013) also stresses that certain terms that are not employed by Josephus in any of his works, but which do appear in the *TF,* curiously appear many times in the works of Eusebius. Thus again, it is Eusebius who becomes the glaring exception to Van Voorst's many claims.

   Olson (2013) also cites the employment of the term "*didaskalos anthrôpôn*" as it appears in the *TF* which is normally translated as "teacher of human beings". Of special importance here is the fact that those who are to *receive* the teaching are placed in the genitive case. Olson sees this formulation as "peculiar", as it is found nowhere in any of Josephus' writings *apart* from the *TF*. However, it is found several times in Eusebius' *Dem. ev.* III, 6 / 27; IX, 11 / 3 when he describes Christ. Olson clearly believes that this betrays

Eusebius as the very author of the *TF* and backs up his views, by pointing out that Eusebius was especially concerned with the incarnation theme of Christ being sent into this world to teach the truth about the One God to all human beings who were willing to receive it.

Within this Christian dogma, the OT (Old Testament) is viewed as merely divine preparation for the Christian message of the *NT*. Here the pre-incarnated Christ (as the divine *Logos*) communicated to the Jewish nation, the awareness of the One God and the necessity to worship Him to the exclusion of all others. However, with the advent of the incarnate Christ in the form of Jesus the truth was now available to *all nations* prepared to accept the truth.[243]

4. Olson's (2013) counter argument for Van Voorst's fourth claim that early Christians would not have contemplated a Christ "winning over both Jew and Greek" is perhaps less compelling. Regardless, he confirms the obvious observation, that Van Voorst seems to take for granted that *all* early Christians read their gospels exactly the same way that say modern historical critics do. Olson (2013) cites Bauer (1909: 344–345) who clearly shows that there was in fact a tendency amongst early Christian writers to assume that Jesus' interaction with gentiles was *far greater* than normally assumed.[244]

   Again, Eusebius becomes the primary example of an early Christian apologist whose actions pointedly refute Van Voorst's claims. We have already seen that Eusebius (*Dem. ev.* III, 5 / 109) states that Jesus brought under his power myriads of both Jews and Gentiles.

   We have already witnessed in the *Dem. ev.* IV, 10 / 14 that Jesus

[243] For a concise discussion of Eusebius' Christology, see Young, 2010, 1–24, (especially 10–11).

[244] The second century C.E. non-Christian, Greek satirist Lucian of Samosata also possibly described early Christians as being more inclusive in their proselytisation, when he wrote:

> The Christians . . . worship a man to this day–the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account… [It] was impressed on them by their original lawgiver that they are all brothers, from the moment that they are converted, and deny the gods of Greece, and worship the crucified sage, and live after his laws.

Cf. Fowler and Fowler, 1949: 11–13.

freed all who came to him from the polytheistic error. In addition, in his *Dem. ev.* III, 5 / 107–109, Eusebius claims that Jesus revealed the power of his divinity to all equally whether Greeks or Jews.

Olson (2013) confirms this finding and points out that in retelling the story of King Abgar in the *Hist. eccl.* I, 13 / 1–5, Eusebius says that Jesus' miraculous powers became so well known that myriads from foreign lands far remote from Judea were led to him, seeking healing. Eusebius also says that Jesus sent his disciples to *all the nations* after his resurrection, but this does not repudiate what he says about Jesus attracting Gentiles during his ministry.

5. Van Voorst's (2000) fifth claim consists of two assertions:

   Firstly, the assertion that the phrase: "Those who had first loved him did not cease [doing so]" is characteristically Josephan. Olson confirms that this perspective is unusual when one considers contemporary scholarship on the issue. Moreover, Van Voorst does not discuss the matter further; it is not even footnoted. As Mason (2003: 169) observed, in this passage, it is not clearly stated what Jesus' adherents "ceased" to do, but leaves the reader to infer their actions from the previous sentence. As has already been stated, this is just as unusual for the Greek language as it is for say English today. Certainly it is also unusual for Josephus and can in no way be described as "characteristic" of Josephus' writing style.

   Van Voorst's second assertion, viz.: the passage makes the *love* of Jesus' followers (rather than Jesus' resurrection appearances), the principal reason for the continuation of his following is in fact based on an incomplete reading of the text that Olson (2013) feels sets up a false dichotomy. The *TF* explicitly gives Jesus' resurrection appearance as the reason for his followers not ceasing in their "love" (or "adherence"). In addition, yet again, this is a distinctly Eusebian perspective. Eusebius elsewhere ranks Christ's desire to give his followers visual proof of life after death so that they would continue in and spread his teaching as one of the major reasons for the resurrection (Cf. *Dem. ev.* IV, 12).

6. As Van Voorst himself notes (2000: 90): "the exception that proves the rule is Eusebius [*Hist. eccl.* III, 33] 'the Christian tribe.'" (my insert). Also, in, inter alia, his *Praep. ev.* (*Preparation for the*

> *Gospel*), Eusebius uses such ethnic terms (including *genos, laos* and *ethnos*) and similar concepts when describing Christianity. [245]

After successfully refuting Van Voorst, Olson (2013) makes a very important observation that is especially pertinent to the import of this book:

At the very least, this particular case study should remind all scholars to be wary of arguments from authority. The fact that one or more scholars have endorsed a particular argument does not mean it is automatically sound. Scholarship is not based on some form of democracy or majority consensus of opinion but rather on providing substantiated evidence to support an argument. Even if one were to reject the overall conclusion that it was most likely Eusebius who wrote the *TF*, it would not change the fact that Van Voorst's six arguments are based on false premises about what a Christian writer would or would not have written. Arguments about what a generic Christian writer is likely to have done always need to be checked against the actual practices of real Christian authors.

In summary, the six arguments against Christian authorship of some elements of the *TF* that Van Voorst has culled from the scholarly literature do not hold with respect to Eusebius.

3.8 The Historical Context for Christian Forgery

Considering that it seems quite difficult to find a more conservative scholar who can deal with the contextual evidence for forgery in an objective and dispassionate manner due to their unwavering belief, is there any justifiable evidence to indicate that Josephus may have had a hand in any aspect of the *TF*? Doherty (2009: 562), for one maintains that, apart from the analyses of the distinctive words and phrases, the entire tone of the *TF* is non-Josephan in character.

Doherty raises another important issue here. Josephus' personal beliefs aside, what Jewish author before the end of the first century C.E. would have openly praised the largely unorthodox teachings and actions of a "marginal Jew" as Meier (1991) terms him? This is regardless of whether or not he was a wandering Hasidic holy man, exorcist, magician or revolutionary. Certainly, from the late first century and second century onwards, as Christianity became more visible, the Jewish leadership would have become increasingly anti-Christian. In addition to this, Josephus was

[245] See especially the discussion in Johnson, 2006: 25–54.

writing for a largely Roman audience. Why would he want to elevate as a Jewish champion, a Jew who was supposedly crucified by the Romans as a common criminal? After all, from a Roman perspective this passage would have been a reminder of a troublesome culture that had taken decades of painful and costly effort to conquer and ultimately subdue.

Whichever way one approaches this issue, it would be an understatement to say that it is difficult to find any believable context within which a Jewish or Roman author living in the latter half of the first century would have described an individual like the gospel Jesus, in anything but a biased manner.

Even the great Christian scholar, Meier, is unable to prove, with his overtly faith-based conclusion that the *TF* once stripped of obvious Christian meddling is the real deal. He, for one surely realises that without the *TF*, there is no record from antiquity to bolster his cherished belief system. Thus, he is prepared to deviate from even the most fundamental of academic principles, and force a conclusion based on emotion and the modicum of rational thought. The desperation that he displays to preserve the *TF* as possibly the last bastion for preserving his irrational belief system is apparent. Indeed, Meier (1991: 68) hails the *TF* as a "passage of monumental importance"-one that proves the existence of the historical Jesus.

Leidner (2000: 299) with reference to Meier's credulity points out that Josephus is the "sole prop for the Christian case". He finds it peculiar that thousands of books by Christian scholars have failed to substantiate even "one line of the gospel story". However, unbelievably, one brief passage (*TF*), supposedly written by a devout and dedicated Jewish priest, can achieve what thousands of Christian scholars failed to do.

Within a verified historical context certain key phrases from the *TF* appear very suspicious.

Firstly, it is doubtful that any first century C.E. (mainly Jewish) members of an evolving Jewish-based cult or cults which were to be described ultimately as "Christianity" would have had identical notions about their faith. This is also true for any individuals who call themselves "Christians", in any specific period of history, let alone those who lived variously in either the second, third, or fourth centuries.

For example, it is well known that both excommunication and anathema were exercised by the dominant groups against those that were considered

to be wayward in either their beliefs and/or religious practices (e.g. The Council of Elvira c. 306 C.E.).

Most of these disputes were Christological as they tended to concentrate on both the nature, as well as the person, of Jesus. This fact alone is highly significant given that if the *TF* is authentic, Josephus is already dealing with such advanced issues as early as 94–97 C.E. Regardless, the eventual evolution of a more or less universal Christian doctrine (i.e. Catholic orthodoxy) remains a matter of on-going scholarly opinion and debate. Conservative wisdom seems to favour the view that, since the time of the apostles, there always existed an overriding majority view which co-existed uncomfortably with any number of lesser "fringe" or splinter groups. Examples here include Docetism, the rise of Montanism in the second century as well as Valentinus' gnostic Christian teachings.

There are also the examples of anti-heretical writings such as Irenaeus' *Haer.* (c. 180 C.E.) and the then acknowledged Epistle of Barnabus that exhorted its readers not to confuse Jewish and Christian practices. It was only when Constantine I started to ease the Christian persecution (c. 305 C.E. onwards) and finally validated Christianity after 313 C.E., that a real sense of uniformity was instilled within the Church. Here, canons were used to endorse acceptable dogmas by various General Councils. Certainly, it was only after the First Ecumenical Council of 325 C.E. that a concerted effort was made to establish a universal, mainstream belief structure complete with documented creed and associated dogmas. Before that time any number of minor variations on a theme had been possible and after 325 C.E. any variations in the new dominant national version were outlawed, including the very powerful Christian grouping known as Arianism.

With the aforementioned facts in mind, the *TF* seems to exhibit a distinctly post-Nicene canonical gospel version of Christianity, with a conspicuously literalist tone devoid of, inter alia, Gnosticism or Docetism. Certainly, the *TF* does not reflect in any obvious way the characteristics that are currently understood as being in accord with the late first century C.E.

The question that no-one seems to have asked directly is "How could Josephus as a first century Pharisaic Jew have composed the tenets of a belief system that was only expressed in such absolute terms in the early fourth century C.E.?"

As an example, the *TF* line: "(he was) a teacher of people who receive the truth with pleasure" could not have emanated from an individual who was

a devout Jew; who advocated the primacy of *Torah*; and who would have had no time for any deviation from Jewish tradition.

As has been noted by other scholars, countless times, Josephus rarely has anything good to say about anyone in his histories and, certainly when he comments on other supposed "messianic" figures known to him (and who are also, incidentally, verified by other historical sources), he is overtly unsympathetic and censorious.

Only in the single case of the *TF* does he ever praise a "messianic" figure, viz.: Jesus. Here, he even goes so far as to claim that this Jesus was more than human. Even more unbelievable (given his earlier references to the religions known to him at the time), he speaks suddenly of another, previously unmentioned extant Jewish cult and religion–the "tribe of Christians".

Another important consideration here, apart from the fact that no mention is made of Jesus in his other comparable book (*War*), is that the reference to Jesus in *Ant.*, is so short, so succinct and so suspiciously overloaded with the essential tenets of the Christian dogma. Surely had Josephus found in this Jesus a quality that he could never find in any other "messianic" Jewish personage–would that not compel him to expand his commentary? Based on his other narratives, we would expect (at the least), just enough information to give the reader some meaningful justification for the following issues:

1. The change of writing style; and

2. The uncharacteristic respect and devotion that he suddenly felt for this incredible yet strangely enigmatic individual.

After all, why would he even bother to include this passage unless he believed it was important? Again, why place it at a point in his narrative that so obviously breaks continuity and detracts from the primary issue he is reporting on (i.e. disastrous events in Jerusalem and in Rome)?

3.9 Chapter Three Summary

Doherty, as a typical sceptic, confirms that for certain scholars who are aware of Josephus' political stance and historical context, even if they want to believe that Josephus did in fact write a genuine record relating to an historical Jesus, certain phrases within the *TF* passage are highly suspicious.

All the evidence points to him being a devout Jew who never ever claimed to be, inter alia, a Christian. And as already discussed, the fact that Josephus, apart from the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Essenes, never hints at the existence of any other religious sect or cult in either Judah, Galilee or Samaria in any of his four books, yet, in the *TF* seemingly contradicts himself by speaking about a "tribe of Christians". This is especially pertinent if one considers that Josephus must have been in Rome (at the very latest), soon after 71 C.E. (cf. Bilde, 1988: 58), and thus in a perfect position to witness at first hand the supposed impact that Christianity was making in that city by that time.

Therefore, if anyone accepts Josephus as the author of the *TF* (even a reduced version) then he or she must also know that Josephus must have been the only known non-Christian author from this (and even later periods), who ever had something positive to say about Christians, let alone admiring them or commending them.

This incredible conclusion is made even more outlandish by the knowledge that in *Ant.* Josephus was writing for a primarily Roman audience under the sponsorship of Flavian.

Most, if not all, conservative scholars who accept partial interpolation, tend to argue that the logic behind their hypothesis is dependent on attempting to reconstruct the presumed authentic original wording of the *TF*. In short, typically an attempt is made to remove any text that is accepted as being non-Josephan and what is left is deemed to be somehow authentic by default.

However, as supported by Doherty and others, the task of even establishing a feasible core of text attributable to Joseph is well-nigh impossible. Doherty (2009: 534) and with reference to Guignebert (1956: 18), reminds his reader that up until the 1950s the prevalent learned estimation was that the two passages in *Ant.* that made mention of Jesus were more than likely, total forgeries. It was only in the latter half of the twentieth century onwards, that increasing attempts have been made by solely Christian scholars to rescue these texts and suggest that there is a valid core of material which can still be employed to prove the existence of an historical Jesus.

As has been reviewed, various approaches have been employed to prove partial interpolation. These include references to specific Josephan writing style, literary progression, the length of the suspected interpolations and its gospel character. When a text contains characteristically Josephan

terminology and turns of phrase it is then deemed to be a candidate for authenticity.

Of course, this approach is open to criticism. For example, Doherty makes the obvious point that if someone really wanted to make a passage appear Josephan they merely had to take note of certain phrases and terms employed by him elsewhere and apply them to the interpolation. Doherty (2009: 535) refers to these idiosyncratic literary aspects as "Josephan fingerprints".

Here, we must be aware of how easy it would be for an individual who had spent considerable time reading and digesting Josephus' works could produce a reasonable forgery. In point of fact, given the wealth of examples supplied by Josephus himself in his extensive writings, literally anyone can lift his ready formulated sentences and re-appropriate meaning as they see fit.

This makes an obvious falsehood of puffed up claims by such scholars as Meier (1991: 63) who seemingly wants his reader to believe that to forge the writing style of Josephus is nothing short of impossible. In this regard, Mason (2003: 171) naively claims that it would have been an act of "unparalleled scribal audacity" for anyone to have written the *TF*. This is nonsense. An individual, intent making this deceitful interpolation (e.g. the *TF*), would first ensure that they understood the layout and style of a particular work by Josephus. Then, armed with this knowledge, they would establish the most convincing position in an extant passage to either a) make fraudulent alterations and/or b) insert additional (fictional) text.

Certainly, it would be hard to imagine someone who was intent on inserting forged text into a genuine Josephan passage to do so after only a very cursory reading of the original text as regards both content and style of writing. Yet it is this sort of naïve premise that seems to underpin the most common argument that when something looks Josephan it must therefore be Josephan.

Doherty believes that the combined evidence against the *TF* being an original creation by Josephus is overwhelming and quite substantial. He also takes note of the great lengths that more conservative scholars will go to, to ostensibly refuse to deal with the evidence presented, and then proceed to put forward alternative, often quite absurd, explanations to explain why one should still seriously consider either part or all of the *TF* to be genuine.

Doherty also strongly intimates that it should be viewed as somewhat

peculiar that so many more or less conformist scholars are quite content to accept that some unknown Christian apologist or scribe deliberately Christianised at least part of Josephus' *Ant.* but will not even look at the possibility that Eusebius may have been one of the chief (if not sole), culprits.

What has been more than suspected for some time now is that Eusebius (as Constantine's official Church historian) was responsible for, inter alia, assisting with the aggressive promotion of the then brand new state religion. In this context, armed as he was with a wide range of manuscripts (that many others were not privy to), Eusebius was in an ideal position to do the following:

1. Assist in the dissemination of the official politically motivated spiritual message; and

2. Assist in refining the new imperial religious dogma.

Of special importance to this debate is the unquestionable fact that scribes who came after Eusebius were more likely to quote the *TF* as presented in the *Hist. eccl.* than from the *Dem. ev.* This was, because, as Doherty has carefully pointed out, the *Hist. eccl.* was much more widely circulated than Eusebius' *Dem. ev.* at the time (i.e. late fourth century C.E.). This would also help to explain how future Christian scribes eventually came to have the standard *Hist. eccl.* version of the *TF* since when eventually able to obtain a genuine copy of the *Antiquities* they would have assumed that the absence of the *TF* was merely an error that could be quickly amended by replacing it. In this context, they would place the missing *TF* into what they assumed was its rightful location as previously prescribed by Eusebius, their trusted church father.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE *JAMES PASSAGE*

4.1 Introduction

This chapter deals more specifically with the other well-known extra-biblical/scriptural narrative concerning Jesus, viz.: *Ant*. 20, 9, 1 / 197–203 which for the sake of clarity, will be referred to as the *JP* (*James Passage*) in this book (cf. Allen, 2017: 1–27). The most common English translation from the Greek is presented below:

Passage from *Ant.* 20, 9, 1 / 197–203[246] (James Passage)

> And now Caesar, upon hearing the death of Festus, sent Albinus into Judea, as procurator. But the king deprived Joseph of the high priesthood, and bestowed the succession to that dignity on the son of Ananus, who was also himself called Ananus. Now the report goes that this eldest Ananus proved a most fortunate man; for he had five sons who had all performed the office of a high priest to God, and who had himself enjoyed that dignity a long time formerly, which had never happened to any other of our high priests. But this younger Ananus, who, as we have told you already, took the high priesthood, was a bold man in his temper, and very insolent; he was also of the sect of the Sadducees, who are very rigid in judging offenders, above all the rest of the Jews, as we have already observed; when, therefore, Ananus was of this disposition, he thought he had now a proper opportunity. Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the sanhedrin of judges, and brought before them **the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James,** and some others; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned: but as for those who seemed the most equitable of the citizens, and such as were the most uneasy at the breach of the laws, they disliked what was done; they also sent to the king, desiring him to send to

[246] English translation according to Whiston (Tr.). 1999. *The New Complete Works of Josephus*: 662 (*Jewish Antiquities*, 20, 9, 1 / 197–203). Cf. Whiston (Tr.) 1895. *Flavius Josephus. The Works of Flavius Josephus,* in *Perseus Digital Library* [Online]. Available: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text: 1999.01.0145

> Ananus that he should act so no more, for that what he had already done was not to be justified; nay, some of them went also to meet Albinus, as he was upon his journey from Alexandria, and informed him that it was not lawful for Ananus to assemble a sanhedrin without his consent. Whereupon Albinus complied with what they said, and wrote in anger to Ananus, and threatened that he would bring him to punishment for what he had done; on which king Agrippa took the high priesthood from him, when he had ruled but three months, and made Jesus, the son of Damneus, high priest [my emphasis].

4.2 Brief Historical Background

In his *COM* (*Commentary on Matthew*), X, 17 / 5268–5269[247] (composed c. 246–248 C.E.), Origen specifically mentions *Ant.* claiming that Josephus had affirmed that those who were involved in James' stoning had suffered divine vengeance:

> And to so great a reputation among the people for righteousness did this James rise, that Flavius Josephus, who wrote the "Antiquities of the Jews" in twenty books, when **wishing to exhibit the cause why the people suffered so great misfortunes that even the temple was razed to the ground, said, that these things happened to them in accordance with the wrath of God in consequence of the things which they had dared to do against James the brother of Jesus who is called Christ.**
>
> **And the wonderful thing is, that, though he did not accept Jesus as Christ, he yet gave testimony that the righteousness of James was so great**; **and he says that the people thought that they had suffered these things because of James**. And Jude, who wrote a letter of few lines, it is true, but filled with the healthful words of heavenly grace, said in the preface, "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ and the brother of James." [My emphases].

As an aside, it should also be pointed out that some scholars (cf. Kirby 2013), believe that this specific passage proves that Origen was referring to an additional source whom he assumed was Josephus, as the latter, based on the extant version of the *James the Just Passage*, does not make reference to the destruction of the temple being caused by James' death. Therefore, either Origen is either fabricating or he is making use of some now lost source that was also quoted by,

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[247]English translation according to Patrick (Tr.) 1986b. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. X, in New Advent.org [Online]. Available: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1016.htm [12 September 2014].

inter alia, Eusebius at a later date.

Also, in c. 248 C.E. Origen (in *Cels.* I, 47)[248] confirms his stance:

> Now this writer [i.e. Josephus], although **not believing in Jesus as the Christ**, in seeking after the cause of the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple, whereas he ought to have said that the conspiracy against Jesus was the cause of these calamities befalling the people, since they put to death Christ, who was a prophet, says nevertheless--being, although against his will, not far from the truth--that **these disasters happened to the Jews as a punishment for the death of James the Just, who was a brother of Jesus (called Christ),--the Jews having put him to death**, although he was a man most distinguished for his justice. Paul, a genuine disciple of Jesus, says that he regarded this **James as a brother of the Lord,** not so much on account of their relationship by blood, or of their being brought up together, as because of his virtue and doctrine. If, then, he says that it was on account of James that the desolation of Jerusalem was made to overtake the Jews, how should it not be more in accordance with reason to say that it happened on account (of the death) of Jesus Christ, of whose divinity so many Churches are witnesses, composed of those who have been convened from a flood of sins, and who have joined themselves to the Creator, and who refer all their actions to His good pleasure [my emphases and insertion].

It should be noted that the extant works of Josephus do not make reference to the destruction of the Temple as being caused by James' death.

In his *Cels.* II, 13, *(*i.e. c. 248 C.E.)[249]*,* Origen writes:

> For they will not maintain that the acquaintances and pupils of Jesus Himself handed down His teaching contained in the Gospels without committing it to writing, and left His disciples without the memoirs of Jesus contained in their works. Now in these it is recorded, that "when you shall see Jerusalem compassed about with armies, then shall you know that the desolation thereof is near." But at that time there were no armies around Jerusalem, encompassing and enclosing and besieging it; for the siege began in the reign of Nero, and lasted till the government of Vespasian, whose son Titus destroyed Jerusalem, on account, as Josephus says, of **James the Just,**

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[248] English translation according to Kirby, 2014b. *Origen. Contra Celsus* in *Early Christian Writings*. [Online]. Available: http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/origen161.html [23 July 2014].

[249] English translation according to Crombie (Tr.). 1885. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. IV, in *New Advent.org* [Online]. Available: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04161.htm [13 September 2014].

> **the brother of Jesus who was called Christ**, but in reality, as the truth makes clear, on account of Jesus Christ the Son of God [my emphases].

Here, again, Origen seems to want to confirm what he believes is true: James' death was the cause of the destruction of Jerusalem.

Later between c. 311–c. 323 C.E., Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* II, 23 / 3)[250] states:

> The manner of James' death has been already indicated by the above-quoted words of Clement, who records that he was thrown from the pinnacle of the temple, and was beaten to death with a club. But Hegesippus, who lived immediately after the apostles, gives the most accurate account in the fifth book of his Memoirs. He writes as follows:

Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* II, 23 / 12–22)[251] continues:

> *Hist. eccl.* II, 23 / 12:
>
> The aforesaid Scribes and Pharisees therefore placed James upon the pinnacle of the temple, and cried out to him and said: "You just one, in whom we ought all to have confidence, forasmuch as the people are led astray after Jesus, the crucified one, declare to us, what is the gate of Jesus."
>
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>
> *Hist. eccl.* II, 23 / 13:
>
> And he answered with a loud voice, "Why do you ask me concerning Jesus, the Son of Man? He himself sits in heaven at the right hand of the great Power, and is about to come upon the clouds of heaven."
>
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>
> *Hist. eccl.* II, 23 / 14:
>
> And when many were fully convinced and gloried in the testimony of James, and said, "Hosanna to the Son of David," these same Scribes and Pharisees said again to one another, "We have done badly in supplying such testimony to Jesus. But let us go up and throw him down, in order that they may be afraid to believe him."
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[250] Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, 2007: 125.
[251] Eusebius Pamphilii of Caesarea. 2018. *Church History Books 1-10* (Paramaribo: New Apostolic Bible Covenant), 40.

Hist. eccl. II, 23 / 15:

And they cried out, saying, “Oh! Oh! The just man is also in error.” And they fulfilled the Scripture written in Isaiah, “Let us take away the just man, because he is troublesome to us: therefore they shall eat the fruit of their doings.”

Hist. eccl. II, 23 / 16:

So they went up and threw down the just man, and said to each other, “Let us stone James the Just.” And they began to stone him, for he was not killed by the fall; but he turned and knelt down and said, “I entreat you, Lord God our Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Hist. eccl. II, 23 / 17:

And while they were thus stoning him one of the priests of the sons of Rechab, the son of the Rechabites, who are mentioned by Jeremiah the prophet, cried out, saying, “Stop. What are you doing? The just one prays for you.”

Hist. eccl. II, 23 / 18:

And one of them, who was a fuller, took the club with which he beat out clothes and struck the just man on the head. And thus he suffered martyrdom. **And they buried him on the spot, by the temple**, and his monument still remains by the temple. He became a true witness, both to Jews and Greeks, that **Jesus is the Christ**. **And immediately Vespasian besieged them.**

Hist. eccl. II, 23 / 19:

These things are related at length by Hegesippus, who is in agreement with Clement. James **was so admirable a man and so celebrated among all for his justice, that the more sensible even of the Jews were of the opinion that this was the cause of the siege of Jerusalem** …

Hist. eccl. II, 23 / 20:

Josephus, at least, has not hesitated to testify this in his writings, where he says, "These things happened to the Jews to avenge **James the Just, who was a brother of Jesus, that is called the Christ**. For the Jews slew him, although he was a most just man.

Hist. eccl. II, 23 / 21:

And the same writer [Josephus] records his death also in the twentieth book of his Antiquities in the following words: "But the emperor, when he learned of the death of Festus, sent Albinus to be procurator of Judea. But the younger Ananus, who, as we have already said, had obtained the high priesthood, was of an exceedingly bold and reckless disposition.

Hist. eccl. II, 23 / 22:

Ananus, therefore, being of this character, and supposing that he had a favourable opportunity on account of the fact that Festus was dead, and Albinus was still on the way, called together the Sanhedrim, and brought before them the **brother of Jesus, the so-called Christ, James by name**, together with some others, and accused them of violating the law, and condemned them to be stoned" [my emphases and insertion].

In c. 392–393 C.E. Jerome (*DVI*, 2)[252], states that:

James, who is called the brother of the Lord, surnamed the Just, the son of Joseph by another wife, as some think, but, as appears to me, the son of Mary sister of the mother of our Lord of whom John makes mention in his book, after our Lord's passion at once ordained by the apostles bishop of Jerusalem, wrote a single epistle, which is reckoned among the seven Catholic Epistles and even this is claimed by some to have been published by some one else under his name, and gradually, as time went on, to have gained authority. Hegesippus, who lived near the apostolic age, in the fifth book of his Commentaries, writing of James, says

"After the apostles, James the brother of the Lord surnamed the Just was made **head of the Church at Jerusalem**. Many indeed are called James. This one was holy from his mother's womb. He drank neither wine nor

[252] English translation according to Richardson (Tr.). 1892. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2nd Series, Vol. III, in *New Advent.org* [Online]. Available: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2708.htm [13 September 2014].

> strong drink, ate no flesh, never shaved or anointed himself with ointment or bathed. **He alone had the privilege of entering the Holy of Holies**, since indeed he did not use woollen vestments but linen and went alone into the temple and prayed in behalf of the people, insomuch that his knees were reputed to have acquired the hardness of camels' knees."
>
> He says also many other things, too numerous to mention. **Josephus also in the 20th book of his Antiquities, and Clement in the 7th of his Outlines** mention that on the death of Festus who reigned over Judea, Albinus was sent by Nero as his successor. Before he had reached his province, Ananias the high priest, the youthful son of Ananus of the priestly class, taking advantage of the state of anarchy, assembled a council and publicly tried **to force James to deny that Christ is the son of God.** When he refused Ananius ordered him to be stoned. Cast down from a pinnacle of the temple, his legs broken, but still half alive, raising his hands to heaven he said, "Lord forgive them for they know not what they do." Then struck on the head by the club of a fuller such a club as fullers are accustomed to wring out garments with–he died. **This same Josephus records the tradition that this James was of so great sanctity and reputation among the people that the downfall of Jerusalem was believed to be on account of his death** [my emphases, layout, spacing and amended punctuation for greater clarity].

Finally, as recorded earlier, Jerome, in his *DVI,* 13*,* (c. 392–393 C.E.)[253] writes:

> Josephus, the son of Matthias, priest of Jerusalem, taken prisoner by Vespasian and his son Titus, was banished. Coming to Rome he presented to the emperors, father and son, seven books On the captivity of the Jews, which were deposited in the public library and, on account of his genius, was found worthy of a statue at Rome…In the eighteenth book of his Antiquities he most openly acknowledges that Christ was slain by the Pharisees on account of the greatness of his miracles, that John the Baptist was truly a prophet, **and that Jerusalem was destroyed because of the murder of James the apostle** [my emphases, correction (underlined) and layout for greater clarity].

The possible role of *Hegesippus*

Much of this section is indebted to the work of Kirby (2014a) who makes a compelling (albeit circumstantial), argument that Origen, far from fabricating and/or embellishing Josephus in *COM*, X, 17 / 5268–5269; *Cels.*

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[253] English translation according to Richardson (Tr.). 1892. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2nd Series, Vol. III, in *New Advent.org* [Online]. Available: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2708.htm [13 September 2014].

I, 47 and *Cels.* II, 13 is innocently attributing too much data to Josephus as his source. Furthermore, Origen displays the same kind of reaction to Josephus in his writings as when quoting *Hegesippus*. Therefore, it follows that Origen probably thinks that they are the same source.

Kirby (2014a) also posits that perhaps Origen is mistaking a Christian tradition prevalent by the second century C.E. (i.e. the specifics of the greatly exaggerated death of James) which is not found in the *NT*. Certainly it is not to be found today in any of Josephus' writings, including the *James the Just Passage* which has come down to us in *Ant.* 20, 9, 1 / 197–203. Due to this reality, possibly there once existed a now lost written source that supplied, inter alia, Origen with information that he truthfully presumed came from Josephus.

With reference to both Origen and Eusebius, Kirby (2014a) correctly observes that both of these church fathers (based in Alexandria) coincidentally made the same sort of mistake. Both, independent of each other, misrepresent Josephus. This leads us to at least consider the possibility that they both drew from a similar erroneous source (i.e. an unattested manuscript tradition-possibly belonging to *Hegesippus*?).

Although it is not impossible that either or both authors were capable of deceit, the similarity of occurrences makes it less likely that both authors, separated by some six decades of history, were attempting the identical deception. Also, Origen moved from Alexandria to Caesarea during his lifetime[254]. In this regard, perhaps Origen took the now lost source with him to Caesarea which was subsequently employed by Eusebius when he worked there some sixty years later.

Kirby (2014a) confirms that there may have been a manuscript, once erroneously attributed to Josephus, whilst it resided in Alexandria. This was quoted from by both Clement of Alexandria as well as his student Origen. It was then transferred to Caesarea by Origen, where it was later quoted by Eusebius. Certainly, Eusebius does seem to quote a passage from *Hegesippus* that Origen once ascribed to Josephus.

Kirby (2014a) believes that the upshot of this probability is that perhaps there once existed a manuscript that was written by either a Jewish or Christian author–more likely the latter–who was subsequently confused

[254] Based on Eusebius' comments Origen first moved to Alexandria in c. 231–232 C.E. Cf. *Hist. eccl.* VI, 26.

with Josephus. Sometime later, someone, noticing the error of attribution, literally invented the name "*Hegesippus*" to distinguish the authorship of the manuscript so that it would not be confused with Josephus.

Lastly, Kirby (2014a) makes a convincing case for the dating of this lost manuscript. This exercise requires the input of both Clement and Eusebius:

In his *Hist. eccl.* IV, 7 /15–8 / 3[255], Eusebius states the following:

> Nevertheless, in those times the truth again called forth many champions who fought in its defence against the godless heresies, refuting them not only with oral, but also with written arguments. **Among these Hegesippus was well known. We have already quoted his words a number of times, relating events which happened in the time of the apostles according to his account. He records in five books the true tradition of apostolic doctrine in a most simple style, and he indicates the time in which he flourished when he writes as follows concerning those that first set up idols**: "To whom they erected cenotaphs and temples, as is done to the present day. **Among whom is also Antinoüs, a slave of the Emperor Adrian, in whose honor are celebrated also the Antinoian games, which were instituted in our day. For he [i.e. Adrian] also founded a city named after Antinoüs, and appointed prophets." At the same time also Justin, a genuine lover of the true philosophy, was still continuing to busy himself with Greek literature**. He indicates this time in the Apology which he addressed to Antonine, where he writes as follows: **"We do not think it out of place to mention here Antinoüs also, who lived in our day, and whom all were driven by fear to worship as a god, although they knew who he was and whence he came."** [My emphases].

This passage reveals Eusebius' obvious concern with calculating a date for *Hegesippus*' period of activity as well as confirming a Christian tradition for his narratives. If he is reliable, Eusebius, places *Hegesippus*' texts alongside those of Justin Martyr (c. 100 / 103–165 C.E.), sometime in the reign of Antoninus Pius[256].

As an aside it is worth taking a brief look at what Clement actually wrote regarding his claimed "Josephan" source material. Depending on the reference cited, a date of anywhere between 180 and 190 C.E. is reckoned for Clement's move to Alexandria.[257] It is also accepted that most, if not all,

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[255] English translation according to McGiffert (Tr.). 1890. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* 2nd Series, Vol. 1, in *New Advent.org*. [Online]. Available: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250104.htm [14 August 2014].

[256] *Titus Fulvius Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius* (86–161 C.E.)

[257] English translation according to Havey (Tr.). 1908. Clement of Alexandria. In

of his *Stromata* was written sometime between c. 198 and 203 C.E. which means that this work was largely conceived whilst Clement was resident in Alexandria.

Regardless, in his *Strom*. I, 21, 147, 2 / 2 [258] Clement states:

> Flavius Josephus the Jew, who composed the **history of the Jews**, computing the periods, says that from **Moses to David were five hundred and eighty-five years**; from David to **the second year of Vespasian**, **a thousand one hundred and seventy-nine**; then from that to the tenth year of Antoninus, seventy-seven. So that from Moses to the tenth year of Antoninus there are, in all, **two thousand one hundred and thirty-three years** [i.e. 2133] [my insertion and emphases].

As should be evident, there is something wrong with Clement's calculation. As confirmed by the University of Pennsylvania CCAT (Center for Computer Analysis of Texts website[259], the total should come to 1841 (i.e. +585 + 1179 + 77 = 1841) and *not* 2133.

Another feature is the mention of the "History of the Jews" which does not precisely replicate the title of any of Josephus' works known today. Also, if one surveys the complete works of Josephus it becomes evident that, apart from the fact that he obviously could never have said anything about Antoninus Pius, he does come close to agreeing with some of the other points quoted in *Strom.* I, 21, 147, 2 / 2. For example in his *War*, 6, 10, 1 / 435[260], Josephus states:

The Catholic Encyclopedia. in *New Advent.org*, [Online]. Available: http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04045a.htm [13 September 2014].

[258] Manuscripts of Josephus. 2003. CCAT at University of Pennsylvania. [Online]. Available: http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/gopher/other/journals/kraftpub/josephusMSS.html [28 July 2014].

[259] Manuscripts of Josephus. 2003. CCAT at University of Pennsylvania. [Online]. Available: http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/gopher/other/journals/kraftpub/josephusMSS.html [28 July 2014].

[260] English translation according to Whiston (Tr.) 1895. *Flavius Josephus. The Works of Flavius Josephus,* in *Perseus Digital Library* [Online]. Available: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0148%3Abook%3D6%3Awhiston+chapter%3D10%3Awhiston+section%3D1 [28 July 2014].

> AND thus was Jerusalem taken, in **the second year** of the reign **of Vespasian**, on the eighth day of the month Gorpeius [Elul] [my emphasis].

Here, the phrase "the second year (of the reign) of Vespasian" is common to both passages.

Again, in his *War,* 6, 4, 8 / 269–270[261] Josephus informs his reader that:

> Now the number of years that passed from its **first foundation** [i.e. the Temple], which was laid by king Solomon, till this its destruction, which happened in **the second year** of the reign **of Vespasian**, are collected to be **one thousand one hundred and thirty**, besides seven months and fifteen days; and from the second building of it, which was done by Haggai, in the second year of Cyrus the king, till its destruction under Vespasian, there were six hundred and thirty-nine years and forty-five days.

Later in his *Ant.* 8, 3, 1/ 61 [262] Josephus states:

> **Solomon began to build the temple in the fourth year of his reign**, on the second month, which the Macedonians call Artemisius, and the Hebrews Jur, **five hundred and ninety-two years after the Exodus** out of Egypt;

There is a mention of "the second year (of the reign) of Vespasian" (*War*, 6, 4, 8 / 269) as well as two sets of numbers that are redolent of what is contained in *Strom*. I, 21, 147, 2 / 2. Although the figure of 1130, if added to the 40-year period[263] for David's reign plus the four years of Solomon's reign (i.e. the date of the laying of the Temple's foundation according to Josephus in *Ant.* 8, 3, 1 / 61), yields 1174. Thus we end up with a total that is five less than that calculated by Clement (i.e. 1179 years from David to the second year of Vespasian). In addition, if we understand the phrase

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[261] English translation according to Whiston (Tr.) 1895. *Flavius Josephus. The Works of Flavius Josephus,* in *Perseus Digital Library* [Online]. Available: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0148%3Abook%3D6%3Awhiston+chapter%3D4%3Awhiston+section%3D8 [30 July 2014].

[262] English translation according to Whiston (Tr.) 1895. *Flavius Josephus. The Works of Flavius Josephus,* in *Perseus Digital Library* [Online]. Available: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0146%3Abook%3D8%3Awhiston+chapter%3D3%3Awhiston+section%3D1 [30 July 2014].

[263] The MT text (1 Kgs 2: 11) yields "And the days that David reigned over Israel (were) forty years, seven years he reigned in Hebron, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years".

"from Moses" (*Strom*. I, 21, 147, 2 / 2) to refer to the end of the Exodus and thus equitable to the phrase "after the Exodus" (*Ant.* 8, 3, 1 / 61), then we have another slight discrepancy when it comes to calculating length of time:

Clement seems to indicate that 585 years separate Moses (i.e. end of the Exodus) from David (i.e. beginning of his reign). Josephus informs us that the first Temple was commenced 592 years after the Exodus ended.

Given that David's reign was 40 years long and the Temple was commenced four years after his death, one obtains + 592 – 40 – 4 = 548 years from the Exodus to the beginning of David's reign (according to Josephus). Whereas for Clement, the calculation comes to 585 years. However, if Clement meant either "from the *death* of Moses to the *death* of David" or "from the beginning of Moses' ministry (i.e. we allow 40 years for the exodus event), to the beginning of David's reign" then one obtains + 585 – 40 = 545 years and accordingly he is only three years out. Here we must assume that Josephus' figures are the standard by which we measure accuracy.

Whichever way one approaches this conundrum, the following conclusions seem to present themselves:

1. either Clement did refer to Josephus for part of his information but was extremely bad at quoting his source and/or he could not deal with basic arithmetic;

2. or Clement is quoting someone else who may have in turn, previously misquoted Josephus.

This raises a number of possibilities. Should we ascribe Clement's inaccurate arithmetic and his reminiscent text to faulty memory as well as confusion between two different but seemingly similar authorities? It is possible that the "*Hegesippus*" authority (misquoted as "Josephus" by Clement) actually mentioned the facts quoted verbatim in *Strom*. I, 21, 147, 2 / 2, and that it is this unknown author who was inspired by his own less than rigorous reading of Josephus.

Another possibility is that Clement is embellishing on Josephus alone, and merely made a quick mental calculation that was out by a few years. In this scenario there is no *Hegesippus*–certainly not in Clement's time.

Regardless, based on these passages, Kirby (2014a) maintains that we can safely ascertain that the unknown author (called *Hegesippus* by Origen) was active around the year ten of Antoninus Pius' reign. It is only contra-

indicated by an error of memory on Eusebius' behalf some sixty years later when he makes an incidental reference to *Hegesippus* whilst commenting on Justin Martyr.

Kirby (2014a) concludes that both Clement and Eusebius indicate a date of authorship in the reign of Antoninus. If Clement is to be trusted, we can narrow this period to 138–148 C.E.

4.3 Arguments For and Against Authenticity

Introduction

The *James Passage* is normally accepted by more conservative scholars as being wholly authentic based on the primary fact that Jesus is not referred to here as actually being *ho Christos* but rather as *legomenou Christou* (*called* the anointed one). The argument here, is that a later Christian forger would have felt compelled to confirm that Jesus *was* the "Messiah" (*ho Christos*), whereas, a non-Christian, like Josephus would not. Therefore, by this sole line of reasoning, Josephus is deemed to be the more likely author.

Indeed, the *JP* is claimed by some scholars to be the most obviously trustworthy of the three texts currently under investigation. For example, Van Voorst (2000: 83), confirms that the majority of scholars believe that not only is the specific reference to "the brother of Jesus called Christ" authentic but also the entire, encapsulating narrative.

Bauckham (1999: 199–232) not only confirms that the greater majority of scholars consider the *JP* to be genuine but also believes that James was duly executed by Ananus for blasphemy. Even Vermes (2010) is perfectly content to accept the *JP* as it is written and because he largely accepts the *TF,* he believes that the reference to Jesus is not out of place. Finally, Painter (2005: 134–141) also makes it quite clear that the *JP* is totally authentic and is a valid historical document.

Origen's references to Jesus and James

Had the *TF* existed in Origen's version of *Ant.* where Jesus is called "the Christ", why does Origen insist so frequently that Josephus had not accepted Christ? Although this is completely true–albeit for other more obvious reasons–as the *TF* now stands, Josephus' acceptance or non-acceptance of Jesus' right to any form of approbation is surely equivocal. Given his normally quite negative view of Jewish arrivistes, his highly positive and

matter of fact statements about Jesus could just as easily be interpreted as evidence for some level of support, if not total acceptance. Regardless, there are a number of facts that we need to be cognisant of:

1. Origen is convinced that Josephus was not a Christian supporter;

2. Origen relies solely on what is surely the *JP* in his attempts to justify that it was the death of Jesus, and not James, that caused the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem;

3. The *TF* obviously did not exist in Origen's version of the *Antiquities*.

Wells (1971: 193) also confirms that Origen speaks of the death of James (the Just) and mentions that it was the cause of the destruction of Jerusalem in c. 68–70 C.E. He does not agree with the interpretation that the death of Jesus was the cause of the Roman siege. Also, as has been established, Origen's information (assuming he didn't forge it himself), most likely comes solely from a reading of the account found in Josephus, and which might be the *JP* as it appears today.

A review of Origen's writings (cf. *COM*, X, 17 / 5268–5269; *Cels.* II, 13; and *Cels.* I, 47) reveal that Origen quotes almost the same idiosyncratic *JP* formulation, viz.: "James the brother of Jesus who is called Christ" and not say "James the son of Joseph" which is the proper Jewish form of address. If so, a later fourth-century interpolator–of the calibre of a Eusebius–could not possibly have forged this specific passage. This passage, if a forgery, was produced sometime *before* the end of the third century C.E.

Painter (1999: 203), who is a Christian scholar, and accepts that Josephus is the original author of the *JP*, warns that when Origen refers to this passage he at best paraphrases its content. This, according to him, casts some doubt on the exact form that this passage took in Origen's time. In short, Painter warns us that historians should have no guarantee that in the third century C.E. the text that Origen read appeared exactly as it does today.

This startling conclusion needs to be contested. If one simply reviews the actual statements made by Origen it should be regarded as pertinent that he uses almost exactly the same wording as is contained in the current form of the *JP* (i.e. "the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James") to describe James, viz.:

1. *COM,* X, 17 / 5268: "James the brother of Jesus who is called Christ"*;*

2. *Cels.* I, 47: *"*James the Just, who was a brother of Jesus called Christ"*;* and

3. *Cels.* II, 13: "James the Just, the brother of Jesus who was called Christ".

In addition, considering that all an interpolator had to do (at most) was add the words "the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James" and at the very least "the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ" to create the forgery, it is safe to assume that Origen does refer to the self-same text. Any other interpretation is forced and coloured by some or other agenda on the part of the scholar concerned.

Lastly, Meier (1991: 57) seems to intimate that, because the account of James' demise is less embellished than the more theatrical versions we typically find repeated in Origen, Eusebius and Jerome, it points to someone recording an historical event who comes from a different tradition. Certainly, Meier feels that if the interpolator had been a more typical Christian he would have also felt compelled to mention such details as James being thrown off the pinnacle of the Temple and being hit on the head with a fuller's club etc.

The degree of suspected interpolation

What does not seem to have been considered up until now, is that without the insertion of this small phrase, viz.: "the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ", the *JP*–or more correctly the *entire* passage found in Book 20, 9, 1 / 197–203 of *Ant.*–need not ever have referred to an individual called "James". Certainly, without this imposed possibility, the purpose of the unadulterated text is clearly intended to inform the reader about the actions of the high priest Ananus the Younger.[264] In c. 62 C.E., he convened the *Sanhedrin* (without the consent of Albinus, the incoming Roman procurator). This was done for the purpose of removing certain individuals who (we might want to assume), were his political opponents. On this issue more will be deliberated in due course.

Regardless, is it not possible that the original reference to a certain "James" in line 200 included his actual designation such as "son of so-and-so" and subsequently, a Christian forger living sometime between the second and

[264] *Ananus ben Ananus* (c. 63 C.E.).

fourth century simply removed this portrayal and replaced it with the words: "the brother of Jesus who was called Christ"? Within this considered scenario, whatever name or names may have originally appeared in Josephus' original text in line 200 could have been replaced by the name "James". Indeed, the original text could have read as follows: "… and brought before them Israel son of Abraham and his followers" or even "… and brought before them Jesus son of Ananus, Michael son of Fabus and James son of Abraham" or any other permutation one cares to imagine.

This one simple and certainly ingenuous act of swapping the names which once occurred in the original text in line 200 with "the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James" would immediately explain away each of the five arguments put forward by Meier (1991: 57–59):

Firstly, fortunately for Eusebius (on this one occasion), he cannot be linked to this possible forgery given the level of agreement between the suspected interpolation (i.e. "the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ") and the statements made by Origen at least six decades earlier. Therefore, if foul play is speculated it is almost certain that Origen (rightly or wrongly), will be amongst the more likely suspects.

Secondly, if a Christian interpolator merely saw a convenient chance to insert some reference to "Jesus" called "Christ", without disrupting the original text too greatly, he certainly had no need or desire to elaborate upon his easily achieved forgery.

Thirdly, given the scenario already previously described, there was absolutely no need for a Christian interpolator to refer to James as the "brother of our Lord" when it was already known and accepted that Josephus was not a Christian. Such wording would have cast great suspicion on its authenticity–ironically the very reason why some conservative Christian scholars would consider it to be authentic! In addition, even by only referring to "Jesus who was *called* Christ" the Christian interpolator manages to draw his reader's attention to at least consider the following possibilities:

1. Jesus was really an historical figure with a written record other than the gospel accounts;

2. Jesus was already recorded by a neutral witness to be the "Christ" in the late first century C.E., thus proving his divinity;

3. Josephus does not need not be a practising Christian to tell us that Jesus was *called* the "Christ" (This position would have well suited the specific needs of the ante-Nicene Christian apologists); and

4. The interpolation is not too long or over-embellished to arouse any suspicion of it being inserted by another hand.

Fourthly, the account obviously differs in time and manner from the official version (i.e. as pointed out by Meier, 1991: 57–59), because, in this scenario, the original account might never have even referred to James (the Just). It could just as easily have referred to somebody else who may not even have been called "James". The interpolator merely used this convenient point in line 200 of Josephus' account of Ananus' atrocities to ensure the inclusion of the following few mission-critical words: "Jesus who was called Christ".

Also, from the hypothetical interpolator's point of view, even if a more critical mind should someday question the slight variance in the accounts of James' death, this could easily be explained away as Josephus' faulty memory or his employment of imperfect sources. The important point that remains, for the intended Christian believer and doubter alike, is that Josephus *knew about* Jesus in his own day and thus, Jesus *must have* really existed. That, after all, is the primary reason behind the forgery–an historical record, other than a gospel account, that confirms the mortal existence of Jesus as well as James the Just.

Lastly, as has already been explained, the reference to the men on trial is obviously cursory because the original purpose of the passage was for Josephus to illustrate Ananus' iniquity. On the other hand, the suspected Christian interpolator merely used the cursory reference to the stoned man (whose name might not even have been James in the original text) and some compatriots as a useful device to insert the critical words "Jesus who was called Christ".

Of course innumerable permutations are possible here but one issue which never seems to be mentioned by scholars is the glaring absence of motive in the *JP* as it reads today.

The lacuna concerns the specifics of the charge against the individual and his colleagues who were stoned as a result of Ananus' judgment. If we ignore for the moment the names that appear in the *JP* in line 200, we realise that we are told precious little about the reasons (political or otherwise)

behind the arrests of the men and the nature of their crime.

Perhaps this is why Jerome (*DVI*, 2) in c. 392–393 C.E., felt it so necessary to palpably falsify aspects of the account and embroider it with very detailed reasons that best suited his apologetic agenda. As was observed earlier (*DVI*, 2), Jerome has the high priest Ananus "taking advantage of the state of anarchy", assembling a council and publicly compelling James (the Just) to deny that Jesus as the "Christ" is the "Son of God". After James refuses, he is condemned to death by stoning. Even here Jerome (like Eusebius, his possible source), embellishes the tale by having James not merely stoned but also thrown from the "pinnacle of the temple"; James' legs are even broken and whilst still barely alive he has only enough strength in his body to raise his hands to heaven and conveniently repeat the last words of Jesus on the cross (reminiscent of Luke 23: 34)[265]:

> Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.

Not content with this bald-faced lie, Jerome then repeats the dramaturgical tale of James being finally struck on the head by a fuller's club and finally, mercifully, dying.

As has been discussed already, Jerome was most likely influenced by, inter alia, Eusebius' diatribe (*Hist. eccl.* II, 23 / 12–18) who in turn was merely aping the second century *Hegesippus*. Regardless, Eusebius greatly exaggerates the death scene for James as well as lying about Josephus blaming the destruction of the Temple (*Hist. eccl.* II, 23 / 20) on this event.

Notwithstanding this fourth century hyperbole, all we are told (in the present Josephan/Eusebian version) is that on the death of Festus, Ananus, who was "very rigid in judging offenders" made use of the "proper opportunity".

As stated in line 199 this makes little sense. For example, was Josephus telling us that Ananus simply liked to have individuals executed without justifiable cause, and was merely waiting for the opportune moment when he was not under Roman authority to give vent to his sadistic temperament?

Or, is something now missing from the original text, immediately before line 200, which formerly gave the correct account of why Ananus needed to

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[265] English (NIV) text according to William D. Mounce and Robert H. Mounce, *The Zondervan Greek and English Interlinear New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 336.

get rid of the unknown man or men in question?

In the current version we are only told that Ananus "assembled the sanhedrin of judges" and then presented them with a group of individuals who were "breakers of the law".

If these individuals had been Ananus' political opponents surely Josephus must have originally, made mention of their names and the nature of the threat that they presented to Ananus? However, in the current version, the reader is none the wiser. This is in fact quite noticeable if one has the eyes to see, because after supposedly giving his reader no clear motive for the arrests, Josephus then goes to great lengths (lines 201–203) to explain that the charges against the men were not justified. These three lines would only make sense if, before line 200, the reader had been told the nature of the charges and the context behind them being levelled at the men in question.

It might also be consider that originally the *JP* (or preceding text), was somewhat longer than it now appears, and once included the genuine reasons behind Ananus' urgent need to make use of the opportune death of Festus to dispatch his enemies. Here, the unknown Christian interpolator may well have removed one (or possibly two), sentences that originally gave the reader the correct names of the offenders (as well as the true nature of their crime). He then inserted this most convenient of phrases: "the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James".

This important possibility strongly suggests that scholars should re-look at this passage far more critically than they have done in the past.

Finally, one must ask the question: "Why would the execution of a small group of, say, religious law breakers (whether or not justified), be of such concern to a Roman procurator?"

Surely the Roman authorities would only be concerned where they felt that the high priest was doing something that might threaten the stability of Roman rule in Judea. Certainly, Jewish internal doctrinal issues were not their primary concern–otherwise why would Albinus have written in anger to Ananus and threatened him with punishment? Again, why did the Roman puppet king Agrippa then feel the need to replace the high priest? The latter point is also very telling, because if this removal of the high priest by the king was due to some threat to Judaism then the execution of a suspected law breaker would be justified. If this law breaker was really an historical James the Just who, according to the *NT*, was part of the circumcision

party[266] and a vehement supporter of Mosaic Law, then the narrative as it now stands, makes even less sense.

Carrier (2012b: 489–514) agrees that the reference to James as brother of Jesus is bogus but explains that the insertion was merely accidental and not subject to wilful counterfeit. He argues that the words "the one called Christ" resulted from the unintentional insertion of a marginal note added by some anonymous reader.

Regardless of who Carrier believes is to blame for this supposedly "innocent" oversight, he makes a valuable contribution to the debate when he proposes that the original text may have referred to someone called "James" but who was the brother of the high priest Jesus ben Damneus and not Jesus (called Christ).

For the sake of complete objectivity and maintaining a provisional state of understanding, it would do well to consider all of the facts at our disposal when analysing each of the three disputed texts (*TF, JP* and *BP*). In short, even if by some stretch of the imagination one of these disputed passages turns out to be genuine it does not confirm the remaining ones. Merely because one of the texts may be ascribed a particular status does not automatically bequeath a similar status to either of the other two disputed texts. The previously acknowledged "band wagon effect", which informs a particular worldview, incapable of major alteration and growth, must be avoided at all costs.

The problem of Christian tradition versus historical fact

James in the *Novum Testamentum*

There is even more evidence that demonstrates that the current version of the *JP* (especially line 200) is fraudulent if one looks at the evolution of the tradition behind the historical existence of James as "brother" of Jesus– often called the "Elder" or the "Just". Many references are made to a disciple/apostle called James in the *NT* but it is not always clear which James is being referred to. More importantly nowhere in the *NT* is any

[266] The *New Testament* informs the reader that Paul wrote to the Galatians (cf. Gal 2 : 9; and 6: 15) about the doctrinal threat to his mission by the escalating faction of Judaisers in the region who insisted on the faithful's strict observance of the Mosaic laws, especially Sabbath observance, circumcision and the Jewish covenant. In this regard, James the Just is often identified as being Paul's adversary.

mention made of an individual called James being martyred or killed, let alone the specifics of a death by stoning.

In the *NT*, Jesus is recorded as having had a number of siblings, one of whom is named "James". Specifically, the four brothers of Jesus as named in the gospels (Matt 13: 55 and Mark 6: 3), were James, Joses, Simon and Judas. It is often assumed (Christian tradition), that James was the eldest and that Joses was the second eldest.

Here it is important not to confuse this James with John's brother who is mentioned in Acts 12: 1–3, and who is assumed to have died c. 44 C.E. This latter James is also known as James the greater, son of Zebedee, and must also be distinguished from James the less, son of Alpheus. Incidentally, he is recorded (Acts 12: 2), as having been killed by the sword.

The hotly disputed Epistle to the Galatians (Gal 1: 18) informs the reader that some three years after Paul started his ministry he visited Jerusalem where he stayed with Cephas for 15 days. Subsequently, he met with "the Lord's brother" (Gal 1: 19) who we can determine by ratiocination was considered to be one of the "apostles". Later in the text (Gal 2: 1), the reader is informed that, after 14 years, Paul revisits Jerusalem where he again (Gal 2: 9) meets with James, Cephas and John. Here, this James, (who together with Cephas and John) is "esteemed" as a "pillar" (of the church) gives rise to the obvious assumption that this is the self-same James previously mentioned in Gal 1: 19. By the context of what is written it would seem that this James favoured circumcision and was either still a practicing Jew or had strong Jewish roots. It is also implied that he held some high position within the Jerusalem Church leadership.

As an aside, it is informative that this assertion agrees with *Gos. Thom.* 12[267]where there is a reference to James the Just as "leader", viz.:

> The disciples said to Jesus, "We know that you are going to leave us. Who will be our leader?" Jesus said to them, "No matter where you are you are to go to James the Just, for whose sake heaven and earth came into being."

In 1 Corinthians there is a reference to "the Lord's brothers and Cephas" (1 Cor. 9: 5), so once again an assumption might be made that this most likely

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[267] English translation from the Coptic according to Patterson and Meyer (Eds and Trs) s.a. *The "Scholars' Translation" of the Gospel of Thomas,* in *The Gnostic Society Library: The Gospel of Thomas Collection,* [Online]. Available: http://www.gnosis.org/naghamm/nhl_thomas.htm [24 September 2014].

refers indirectly to, inter alia, James (the Just) as well.

A "James", who is normally assumed to be identical to the gospel accounts, and who is very likely the same individual mentioned in the Pauline epistles, is mentioned in Acts 15: 13: "When they finished, James spoke up. 'Brothers, listen to me'".[268]

Supposedly, this same person is also mentioned in Acts 21: 17–18[269] (in an account reminiscent of Gal 1:18-19 and Gal 2:9): "When we arrived at Jerusalem, the brothers and sisters received us warmly. The next day Paul and the rest of us went to see James, and all the elders were present."

Thus, other than the *JP*, the often ambiguous references found in the gospels, as well as the clearly apocryphal Jas (Epistle of James)[270], there is in fact *no independent* account of a brother of Jesus called James. The previously mentioned Jas merely confirms a Christian tradition that Jesus had a brother called James.

Assuming that this James is really either the half-brother or full brother of an historical Jesus, and based *solely* on the contents of Acts and Gal one may make the deduction that the apostle Paul's conversion took place sometime between 33 and 34 C.E. This means that he met with someone named James in c. 36/37 C.E. and possibly again in c. 50/51 C.E. This is the latest date that can be established for a possible brother or cousin of Jesus called James being mentioned. And even here we have no way of knowing whether this is a fictitious James or an actual reference to an historical personage. If we assume the latter, then the latest date that we can adopt for this individual, still being alive, is c. 51 C.E.

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[268] English (NIV) text according to William D. Mounce and Robert H. Mounce, *The Zondervan Greek and English Interlinear New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 521.

[269] English (NIV) text according to William D. Mounce and Robert H. Mounce, *The Zondervan Greek and English Interlinear New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 551.

[270] Schaff (1892: 22) reminds us that Martin Luther "disliked, most of all, the Epistle of James because he could not harmonize it with Paul's teaching on justification by faith without works, and he called it an epistle of straw as compared with the genuine apostolic writings". He also (Schaff: 1892: 203) states: "It is well known that Luther deemed it impossible to harmonize the two apostles … and characterized the Epistle of James as an 'epistle of straw,' because it had no evangelical character ('keine evangelische Art')".

James according to the early Church Fathers

Based on the evidence accumulated thus far, one can be fairly certain that Origen, at the very least, either redacted or had access to the same *JP* we know today. Thus, even if he was not the very interpolator we seek, it is not unreasonable to assume that he did have access to it by c. 246–248 C.E. On this point, Painter (1999: 205) confirms that Origen claims that Josephus, on two occasions, blamed the destruction of Jerusalem as a divine punishment for the killing of James (the Just) (Cf. Table 5).

In point of fact, on reviewing the literature, it turns out that Origen mentions Josephus' reference to James on *four* occasions: twice in his *COM*, X, 17 / 5268–5269*,* once in *Cels.* I, 47 and again in his *Cels.* II, 13.

The only other early author (apart from the disputed Josephus) to mention James before the close of the second century C.E. is *Hegesippus*[271] who as early as c. 165–175 C.E. tells his reader in great detail that James (as brother of the Lord) was hurled from the top of the Temple and then because he survived this attempt on his life he was then summarily stoned to death. *Hegesippus* also tells us that this happened immediately *before* the destruction of the Temple by Vespasian and as such it would point to a date of c. 68–70 C.E.

If this account is in any way accurate it means that the *JP* is in direct contradiction to both the date (as much as a decade out) as well as the manner and circumstances of James' death (The *JP* states that James was stoned along with "others" after due trial and sentencing by a high priest).

The issue is further compounded by the fact that, by the fourth and fifth centuries it was more normal for the mainstream church to defer from referring to Jesus as having flesh and blood brothers. In this regard, it will be recalled that in his *DVI,* 2 Jerome (c. 347–420 C.E.) maintains that James was Jesus' cousin and the biological son of Mary of Cleophas. Jerome stresses that James was *not* the son of Joseph by another wife.

At this juncture it is also worth mentioning the Christian scholar, Whealey (2003), who as a result of her avowed in-depth investigation of, inter alia, the *JP*, deems it to be wholly authentic. Her reason is based on the assumption that all Christians, especially after the second century C.E., would have found it unpalatable to speak of Jesus having a biological

[271] Cf. Hegesippus, *Fragments from the Acts of the Church; Concerning the Martyrdom of James, the Brother of the Lord,* from Book 5.

brother due to the need to uphold the dogma of Jesus' mother's perpetual virginity.

As previously elucidated at some length, Jerome also lies (cf. Table 5) about Josephus' reasons for the destruction of the Temple in his *DVI*, 2. He cites him as evidence that it was because of the death of James the Just that God punished the Jews. Jerome's text (*DVI*, 2) also tells us that this particular James was the High Priest. Needless to state, nowhere in any other reliable historical record is such an assertion even vaguely tenable.

Thus in the final analysis it would seem that it is quite unreasonable to want to maintain that Josephus, wrote the words "the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James".

James in the Dead Sea Scrolls

One last possible place that one might be tempted to try to extract something historically reliable concerning the enigmatic James the Just, pertains to the much maligned Dead Sea Scroll literature. Davies (in Chilton and Evans, 1999: 17–19), comments on Eisenman's (1983 and 1986) now discounted hypothesis that the "Teacher of Righteousness" as mentioned several times in the Qumran material, especially the *Damascus Document* (cf. Vermes, 1995: 95–105); the *Commentary on Micah* (cf. Vermes, 1995: 335); and the *Commentary on Psalms* (cf. Vermes, 1995: 348–352), was none other than Jesus' brother James. Davies points out that the various manuscripts that were found at Qumran did not necessarily originate there, and more importantly, most likely date far too early to accommodate a plausible historical James the Just.

The facts are that, even if by some miracle the Qumran literature actually referred to an historical James the Just, there is no way of corroborating this, because the references to James would have to be allusions at best. At no time is an actual individual named or clearly identifiable. Therefore, even here there will be slim pickings for the historian looking for substantiated fact.

4.4 Meier's Proof: A Case Study

Meier (1991: 57) is confident that the *JP* is authentic because he believes that in the passage, the reader is only presented with an "almost blasé" reference to James. Thus, for Meier, Joseph treats with James as a "minor character". In this interpretation, James is only cited because his trial and

execution led to Ananus' removal.

To support this notion, Meier (1991: 57–59), posits five primary (albeit unsubstantiated) and somewhat laboured, reasons why the *JP* should be considered wholly authentic, viz.:

Firstly, the *JP* occurs, with no apparent variation, in the primary Greek manuscript tradition of *Ant.* and Eusebius quotes the passage in his *Hist. eccl.* II, 23 / 22, as early as the beginning of the fourth century C.E.

Secondly, Jesus' brother James (the Just) is only mentioned in passing by Josephus and is "obviously" considered to be of minor importance. However, because "James" is such a common name in both first century C.E. Jewish circles as well as Josephus' writings, Josephus must have felt the need to clarify this particular James' identify. Because he knew so many persons who were called "James" and he did not know who James' father was (but note, surprisingly, according to Meier [1991: 58], he did know who his famous messianic brother was), he has *no choice* but to seemingly break with long established Jewish tradition and refer to him as "the brother of Jesus-who-is-called-Messiah". Again, it is interesting that Josephus would have done this considering how quickly he denigrates any other supposed messianic upstarts in all of his other writings.

Thirdly, the *JP* does not refer to James in the way that Gal 1: 19[272] does. The only direct reference to James as *the* brother of Jesus in the entire *NT* refers to Jesus as "the Lord":

> "…James, the Lord's brother."

There are only four indirect references in the *NT* where Jesus is mentioned by name in relation to all of his siblings, but here it is always as part of a longer sentence. One typical example reads: "While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him" (Matt 12: 46)[273] The only other *NT* passage where James is mentioned by name as a brother of Jesus is when he is mentioned as part of a collective: "… his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas". (Matt 13: 55). Here again, Jesus is not mentioned by name but inferred. Elsewhere the term "Jesus" is only mentioned rarely in relation to unspecified siblings, for

[272] English (NIV) text according to William D. Mounce and Robert H. Mounce, *The Zondervan Greek and English Interlinear New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 729.
[273] See also Matt 12: 47; Mark 3: 31; and Acts 1: 14.

example: “Jesus' mother and brothers.” (Luke 8: 19) and by inference: “Your mother and brothers.” (Mark 3: 32). In 1 Cor. 9: 5, Jesus is referred to as “Lord” when associated with his brethren: “the Lord’s brothers.” Finally there is a reference to a believer in Christ being a “brother in the Lord” (Phlm 1: 16).

Meier (1991: 58) confirms that the second century C.E. church historian *Hegesippus* also only ever uses such terms as “cousin of the Lord” and “brothers of the Saviour” etc. Meier (1991: 58) explains that “…Josephus’ designation of James as “the brother of Jesus” squares neither with *NT* nor with early patristic usage, and so does not likely come from the hand of a Christian interpolator”. In this connection, Paul Winter (in Schürer, 2014: 431) states “…if a Christian forger had inserted a reference to Jesus, he would scarcely have been content to mention Jesus in such non-committal fashion.” However, this naïve argument can be equally countered: For example, if a person wanted to make a convincing Josephus-type forgery why would they risk detection by interpolating a lengthy and obviously non-Josephus style messianic accolade?

Fourthly, Josephus’ account of the stoning event differs significantly in terms of time and event from the “official” church version as espoused by *Hegesippus* in the second century C.E. Meier (1991: 58), reminds his reader that Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* II, 23 / 3–19) had stressed that *Hegesippus*’ version of events agreed fundamentally with Clement of Alexandria’s account. In brief then, *Hegesippus*’ account has James’ death immediately followed by Vespasian’s destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. However, Josephus’ version clearly occurred in 62 C.E. Meier’s (1991: 58), argument is that if a Christian interpolator was responsible for this passage, he would have written an account that accorded with the more official version. As Josephus’ account is at some variance it stands to reason that he must be the authentic author. Indeed, this may well be the only possibly valid reason cited by Meier but, ironically, it may also hold the very key to explaining how and when this text was interpolated.

It is quite surprising that Meier takes Eusebius’ account seriously. Indeed it shares many aspects of Jerome’s hyperbole.

Lastly, Josephus’ reference to James is cursory and lacks the loquacious, enlightening, and more didactic, characteristics of *Hegesippus*’ “Christian” version.

Meier (1991: 59) concludes his affirmation of the *JP* by stating “In short, it

is not surprising that the great Josephus scholar Louis H. Feldman notes: '…few have doubted the genuineness of this passage on James.'"

4.5 Barnett's Proof (B): A Case Study

Barnett's need to protect his worldview, despite the weight of evidence stacked up against it, has already been witnessed in his treatment of the *TF*. As should be expected, his subsequent handling of the *JP* is also totally dependent on his constructed reality.

Firstly, Barnett gives no hint of exactly how easy it would be to perpetuate a fraud in this particular passage and as has already been discussed, the mere swapping of an unknown name for a short phrase, viz.: "James, the brother of Jesus who was called Christ" is mere child's play.

The result of such an obvious piece of deceit is to supply hard historical evidence that can convince the more sceptically minded that:

1. James the brother of Jesus actually existed;

2. Jesus actually existed; and, most importantly; and

3. Jesus was the divinely prophesied and acknowledged messiah.

However, Barnett treats this text as being authentic and does not even hint at any of the contemporary debate surrounding its status as a bona fide primary source.

Unbelievably, Barnett (2009: 52), claims that unlike the *TF*, the *JP*'s authenticity is not in doubt. It would seem that Barnett has ignored all criticisms against this passage's authenticity as being merely false and baseless speculations made by non-believers. Perhaps he sincerely can see no problems with the passage.?

Certainly, his explanations of what is being described by the text is based on a literalist reading totally devoid of any historical understanding of the customs of the time in question. For example, Barnett fails to make any comment on why a Jewish man (i.e. James) would be recorded so uncharacteristically as being the brother of another individual (i.e. Jesus). Barnett is also seemingly unaware of the historical problem of having James martyred during the period that Ananus (Annas) was the high priest. Certainly, as has already been discussed earlier, had the *JP* been authentic it would have gravely undermined the avowed accuracy of the traditional

Christian account. This has James the Just executed (depending on the apologist[274] concerned), to anywhere between 62 and 69 C.E.

4.6 The Numismatic Evidence

New evidence has only quite recently come to light thanks to the pioneering work of Kokkinos (2010: 385–386), that may also aid any attempt to ratiocinate the actual events surrounding James' death. This in turn could well shed some light on whether or not the *JP* is a forgery.

To understand the context of this evidence, one must turn to the issue of the terms of office for, inter alia, Cumanus[275], Felix[276], Festus[277] and Albinus[278] as procurator in Judea. Certainly, the dates for their tenures are still hotly disputed.[279]

However, Kokkinos believes that the year in which Festus succeeded Felix can be proven with some certainty based on the numismatic evidence supplied by extant procuratorial coins. In this context, Kokkinos (2010: 385) points to specific coins[280] issued under Felix' term dated to year 14 of the reign of the emperor Claudius (10 B.C.E.–54 C.E.), which equates to the period occurring between January and October 54 C.E.

According to Josephus (*War*, 2, 12, 1 / 223) Cumanus, became procurator of Judea in the summer of 48 C.E., immediately after the death of Herod of Chalcis in the autumn of 48 C.E. However, Josephus also informs his reader (*Ant.* 20, 5, 2 / 103) that this event occurred *before* Herod of Chalcis' death proving that Josephus does not always get things right. Regardless, Kokkinos is certain that Cumanus' arrival occurred shortly after or even

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[274] Theologians tend to favour a date of c. 62 C.E. based on their reading of Josephus or Jerome. However, based on Hegesippus, Clement of Alexandria or Eusebius, James the Just was stoned in c. 69 C.E. no doubt to serve as a reason for the destruction of the Temple the following year. Cf. Eddy and Boyd, 2007: 189.
[275] *Ventidius Cumanus* (fl. c. 48–52 C.E.).
[276] *Marcus Antonius Felix* (born c. 5–10 C.E.).
[277] *Porcius Festus* (fl. c. 55–62 C.E.?).
[278] *Lucceius Albinus* (fl. c. 62–69 C.E.).
[279] Kokkinos (2010: 385) refers his readers to, inter alia, Smallwood, 1976: 269 n. 40; Jewett, 1979: 40–44; Kindler, 1981: 20–21; Bruce, 1986: 284–287; and Schwartz, 1992: 218–242.
[280] Kokkinos (2010: 385) refers to various extant examples of procuratorial coins dated to the fourteenth year of Claudius' reign (January 54 to October 54 C.E.) as catalogued in, inter alia, Meshorer, 1982: 284–285.

during the Jewish revolt which culminated with the crucifixion of the sons of Judas the Galilean under the prefecture of Tiberius Alexander during the period of *Pesach* in 48 C.E. According to Josephus (*Ant.* 20, 6, 1 / 118–124; cf. *War*, 2, 12, 2 / 223–2, 12, 5 / 240) Cumanus' failure to adequately respond to an anti-Jewish murder in Samaritan territory led to a violent conflict between Jews and Samaritans.

Following an investigation by the governor of Syria, Quadratus[281], Cumanus was sent to Rome for a hearing before the emperor Claudius who held him personally responsible for the violence and accordingly, sentenced him to exile. This trial could not have occurred *before* 51 C.E. It is well known that Felix immediately succeeded Cumanus, therefore, the earliest date for Felix' arrival in Judea as procurator would have to have been c. 51–52 C.E. Kokkinos (2010: 385), emphasises here that it should be accepted that Felix must have served as procurator for at least two years *before* his first coins were minted. Festus' coins were minted in year five of the reign of the emperor Nero (i.e. between October 58 and October 59 C.E.)[282] which means that as his coins were minted at least a year *after* his arrival, he must have taken office sometime before 57–58 C.E. If accurate, this would place Paul's journey to Rome (cf. Acts 25: 12–27; 27: 1–44; 28: 1–31) in the winter of 58/59 C.E. Kokkinos' very sound arguments result in the following *provisional* dates of procuratorship, viz.:

- Felix: c. 52–57/58 C.E.
- Festus: c. 57/58–62 C.E.
- Albinus: 62–64 C.E.

According to Kokkinos (2010: 385–386) there is yet further evidence that Festus died whilst in office which makes it possible for his procuratorship to have ended even earlier than was previously believed. Again, this is backed up by undisputable numismatic evidence. Kokkinos (2010: 385–386) explains that more conventional dating places the renaming of *Panias*/*Caeasarea* to *Neronias* to the period 62–64 C.E. but datable coins prove that the *Neronias* era commenced in 60/61 C.E., an event overseen by

[281] *Gaius Ummidius Durmius Quadratus* (12 B.C.E.–c. 60 C.E.).
[282] Kokkinos (2010: 385), refers to catalogued examples of Festus' coins in, inter alia, Meshorer, 1982: 285–286.

Albinus himself. This means that he must have already arrived in Judea as early as 59 C.E. and not in 62 C.E. as is normally believed.

Critics fuelled by more conventional wisdom may raise the issue that western history favours a date of no earlier than c. 62 C.E. for Albinius' arrival in Jerusalem. However, in point of fact, much uncertainty exists about the accuracy of the western dating system, especially in the context of the Julian-Claudian period. By way of example, Jewish authorities have always favoured a date of c. 68 C.E. for the destruction of the Temple which is nearly two years earlier than the western date of 70 C.E. In addition the periods of reigns for many of the Julio-Claudian emperors differ quite considerably depending on whether the source is say Josephus, Dio[283] or Epiphanius[284] etc.

This evidence of an earlier date for Ananus which is surely convincing, means that Josephus' account of Ananus' actions in the *JP* occurred anywhere between three and thirteen years *earlier* than previously believed, making it even more unlikely that the individual supposedly identified as James the brother of Jesus was the victim of the stoning originally described. A forger, living between the second and fourth century of the Common Era, would not have been aware of how inaccurate their dates were and so happily placed the interpolation in what they thought was the ideal place in the Ananus narrative in *Antiquities,* but unknowingly in the wrong period. Here, the interpolator quite possibly removed any statements made immediately before line 200 concerning the nature of the charges against the unknown victims as well as replacing their names and designations with "…the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James…".

This evidence should be viewed as insurmountable for any scholar who continues to insist that the *JP* is in any way authentic and by extension places even more doubt on the *TF*.

4.7 Chapter Four Summary

Based on the arguments reviewed thus far it can be ascertained that:

1. Apart from the *JP* we do not have any other extra-biblical evidence that James even existed. Here, the Dead Sea Scroll literature cannot serve as evidence for James' existence. Based purely on the *NT* it is

[283] (*Claudius* or *Lucius*) *Cassius Dio Cocceianus* (155–235 C.E.).
[284] Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis/Constantia (c. 310/320–403 C.E.).

possible to surmise that he was believed to be Jesus' sibling, favoured circumcision and held a senior leadership position in the Jerusalem Church in the first century C.E. However, it is solely Christian tradition that supplies details of his trial and death;

2. All Christian apologists cited (Origen, Eusebius and Jerome) misquote Josephus as regards the reasons for the destruction of Jerusalem. This means that, apart from them possibly regurgitating a Christian tradition, they were certainly capable of embellishment or there once existed a Josephan text that is now lost;

3. Origen quotes the *JP* practically verbatim strengthening the notion that he had read it. However, he never refers to the *JP* as the *James Passage*–only in the context of quoting Josephus in order to justify the spurious cause for the destruction of the Temple;

4. The *JP* is far less embellished than one would expect from the details of the Christian tradition;

5. James' mention is cursory. It has been suggested that he is only mentioned because his illegal execution causes Ananus to be deposed. However, given that he is uncharacteristically referred to as "the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ" cannot be dismissed as being merely incidental;

6. If a Christian forger had inserted a reference to Jesus in the *JP*, he would have more likely ensured that it received more prominence. However, this factor really depends on the actual opportunity and intentions of the forger. One should not generalise the specific reasons for this possible forgery;

7. Josephus' *JP* account differs in time and details from the official second century Christian accounts, suggesting early authorship;

8. Albinus arrived in Jerusalem in c. 59 C.E. and could not possibly have arrived as late as say 68 or 70 CE as intimated by the Christian tradition. Therefore, if the Christian tradition is correct then the *JP* is a proven forgery. If the *JP* is authentic then the Christian tradition is inaccurate; and

9. The preceding passages (i.e. before line 200) leading up to the

reference to James appear to be missing vital information.

Despite the assurances of many Christian scholars, it is difficult to see how the *JP* can in any way appear as an innocent text. If it is authentic, then, in support of Vermes (2010) we must seriously consider the *TF* to also be authentic. To take any other stance would seriously question why Josephus would have expected his reader to know who Jesus was in the *JP*.

However, the fact that the *TF* is more likely to be counterfeit strongly suggests that we need to be far more circumspect before naively reading the *JP* as unqualified historical fact.

Regardless of authenticity one can be assured that the context for the *JP* is too early for the trial and death of the traditional James the Just. Also, given the lack of embellishment it might be convenient to believe that the passage is also of an early composition–possibly at a time before the James tradition became exaggerated?

However, to naively excuse a possible Christian interpolator will not suffice. If the purpose was to deceive then there is equally good reason why the forger did not want to overplay his hand. The mere changing of the name of the condemned individual in the court of Ananas was enough to have an historical reference created without alerting the reader to any possible skulduggery.

The suspected missing text in the preceding passage also serves as additional evidence that the forger needed to first remove the exact details of the issue that troubled Ananas before establishing the James and Jesus references. Here, one can assume that the nature of the issue that led to the opportune executions of the now unknown individuals who so displeased Ananus would have severely contradicted the reference to "…the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James…".

Lastly, if one needs the name of the chief suspect for this interpolation, Origen is certainly the most likely candidate. Although, in his *Cels*. II, 22, he makes it clear that he thinks that the death of Jesus was the ultimate cause for the destruction of the Temple, he repeatedly makes mention of Josephus' reference to James in his many writings. In these contexts, he falsely records Josephus as blaming the death of James for the destruction of Jerusalem and as has been clearly shown, Origen recurrently employs the almost identical phraseology as found in the *JP* today.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE *BAPTIST PASSAGE*

5.1 Introduction

As has already been established, this book deals with three disputed texts of Christian import, all of which reside within Josephus' *Ant.* (c. 97 C.E.). This chapter deals exclusively with the passage (i.e. *Ant.* 18, 5, 2 / 116–119), which makes mention of John the Baptist. For the sake of clarity in this book, this narrative will be referred to as the *BP* (*Baptist Passage*). This passage is presented below with a popular English translation:

Passage from *Ant.* 18, 5, 2 / 116–119[285] (*Baptist Passage*)

> Now some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God, and that very justly, as a punishment of what he did against John, that was called the Baptist: for Herod slew him, who was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism; for that the washing [with water] would be acceptable to him, if they made use of it, not in order to the putting away [or the remission] of some sins [only], but for the purification of the body; supposing still that the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand by righteousness. Now when [many] others came in crowds about him, for they were very greatly moved [or pleased] by hearing his words, Herod, who feared lest the great influence John had over the people might put it into his power and inclination to raise a rebellion, (for they seemed ready to do anything he should advise,) thought it best, by putting him to death, to prevent any mischief he might cause, and not bring himself into difficulties, by sparing a man who might make him repent of it when it would be too late. Accordingly he was sent a prisoner, out of Herod's suspicious temper, to Macherus, the castle I before mentioned, and was there put to death. Now the Jews had an opinion that the destruction of this

[285] English translation according to Whiston (Tr.) 1895. *Flavius Josephus. The Works of Flavius Josephus,* in *Perseus Digital Library* [Online]. Available: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0146%3Abook%3D18%3Awhiston+chapter%3D5%3Awhiston+section%3D2 [25 July 2014].

> army was sent as a punishment upon Herod, and a mark of God's displeasure to him.

It is most significant that this is the only extant reference to John the Baptist found outside of scriptural writings.

5.2 Brief Historical Background

In his *Cels.* I, 47 Origen refers specifically to *Ant.* 18, 5, 2 / 116–119 to recapitulate what Josephus had to say about John the Baptist and his version of baptism. This fact shows that the *BP* was extant in some form or another, as early as the mid-third century C.E.

5.3 Arguments For and Against Authenticity

Introduction

As with the other two suspected interpolations, the *BP* is not considered to be the work of Josephus by those authorities who subscribe to a mythical Jesus yet nearly all of those scholars who consider themselves to be Christian more typically consider this passage to be an authentic Josephan text. It is interesting to note that the highly critical scholar, Bilde (1988: 222–223), despite declaring the *TF* to be largely fabricated, seemed quite content to accept the *JP* as being wholly authentic.

However, more liberal scholars largely agree that, inter alia, based on its arbitrary placement in *Ant.* 18*,* the *BP* gives all the warning signs of being an interpolation by a later Christian hand. To obviate this interpretation, more conservative scholars will tend to argue that it is not even a partial forgery since it is not (like the better known *TF*) reminiscent of a canonical gospel account. Certainly, in the first four centuries of Christianity–even before the Council of Nicaea (325 C.E.)–there existed any number of Antilegomena and Apocrypha. Any one of these might arguably have served as the source for this more atypical version of the better known *NT* Baptist narrative.[286]

[286] Cf. Matt 3: 1–12 and 14: 1-12; Mark 1: 4–9 and 6: 14–29; Luke 3: 2–20 and 9: 7–8.

The possible role of Eusebius

As has already been seen many times (cf. Chapter Three), Eusebius is often viewed as the most likely candidate as both formulator and interpolator of the *TF*. However, like the *JP*, when it comes to the *BP* the situation is not quite so clear. As has already been acknowledged, Origen (c. 184/185–253/254 C.E.) (*Cels.* I, 47) refers specifically to *Ant.* 18, 5, 2 / 116–119 to recapitulate what Josephus had to say about John the Baptist. This fact shows that the *BP* was extant in some form or another, as early as the mid-third century C.E. If fraud is indicated, then, this fact alone would seem to exonerate Eusebius as being the instigator of the *BP* (albeit in an earlier form).

Regardless, some decades later (c. 325 C.E.), Eusebius quotes from *Ant.* 18, 5, 2 / 116 as regards John the Baptist in his *Hist. eccl.* I, 11. This is normally assumed to be (even if not identical with extant versions), at least similar to what is read today. Specifically, Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* I, 11), says the following concerning Josephus: "After giving this account of John, in the same part of his work he goes on to speak as follows of our Saviour…" The point is that after referring to the account of John the Baptist in *Ant.* Eusebius then proceeds to quote the *TF* which of course, refers to Jesus. Ignoring for the moment the possibility that Eusebius may have interpolated the *TF* and possibly amended the other (i.e. the *BP*), one might want to assume that in *his* version of *Ant.* the *BP* (or something akin to it), was placed *before* the *TF*.

If this is really the case, it is highly significant given that in the version that has survived to the present day it is the *TF* that *precedes* the *BP* by at least two chapters.

Doherty (2009: 560) believes that although this might just be an example of carelessness on the part of Eusebius it might also be evidence that prior to his time, copies of *Ant.* contained various versions of the *BP* and the *TF* which could be found in different places within the greater text (i.e. placed in positions that do not agree with where they appear today). Within this strained scenario, Doherty strongly intimates that perhaps Eusebius found himself in the ideal position to finally decide on their final form and location within *Ant.*

This particular scenario should be viewed as being highly unlikely for the simple reason that for an interpolation to be in any way successful requires it to be situated within a plausible context. If the *BP* was to ever be situated

elsewhere in *Ant.* where else would such a context be found?

Doherty's speculations might lay him open to a charge of wanting to have things both ways: *If* Eusebius had really found pre-existing versions of *both* the *TF* and the *BP* in his version of *Ant.* (regardless of their placement), it would also suggest that he was not the *instigator* of a deception but merely an *opportunist* who refined what had been presented to him by a previous fraudster.

Within this scenario (depending on how considerable an amendment Eusebius made to either of the two passages in question), his culpability may not be as severe as previously suspected, he may merely have been guilty of inserting the ready-made passages into what he considered to be more appropriate positions within the greater text and naively believed their content to be genuine. Of course, conversely, he may also have been supplied with the most rudimentary of glosses that he took great care to expand and modify to suit his own propagandistic commitments.

Evidence of Christian interpolation

What is most significant is that scholars like Doherty who do not accept the historicity of Jesus, have seen this as additional evidence that the *BP* was also a Christian interpolation.

Eddy and Boyd (2007), refer to the well-known fact that in Eusebius' *Dem. ev.* III, 5 (which is normally assumed to have been written between c. 312–318 C.E. and accordingly, somewhat earlier than his *Hist. eccl.*), Eusebius, whilst introducing the *TF* (*Dem. ev.* III, 5), says he will quote Josephus, "who in the eighteenth chapter [i.e., book] of *The Archaeology of the Jews* [i.e. *Ant.*], in his record of the times of Pilate, mentions our Saviour…"

Many scholars point out that this is somewhat peculiar. If the *TF* was at the same position in *Ant.* as it is found today (as Eusebius suggests in his *Dem. ev.*), than it must have been situated two chapters *before* the *BP* (i.e. exactly as it is today). Yet, as we have already witnessed, Eusebius intimates that the *TF* was situated *after* the *BP* with the reference made in his later *Hist. eccl.*

On this issue, Doherty (2009: 561) asks "Does this speak to a fluidity of location for both of these passages in the time of Eusebius?" Obviously the permutations here, are endless. However, a popular reconstruction involves considering for a moment the possible situation had an earlier version of the

BP and the *TF* not been interpolated by Eusebius but found by him situated in his copy of the manuscript at the time of writing his *Dem. ev.* (completed by 311 C.E.) and *Hist. eccl.* (published in c. 313 C.E.). Within this scenario an earlier Christian interpolator looking for the best place to insert the *TF* (regardless of which version it may have been at the time) is assumed (due to his Christian bias), to have wanted to ideally place it somewhere *after* the *BP*. However, as has already been mooted and as Doherty corroborates, perhaps the alleged interpolator felt more compelled to juxtapose it with the extant references to Pontius Pilate. After all, this is the only suitable place in the *entire Ant.* where some reference to an historical Jesus might be more readily expected to occur.

One assumes here that had the *BP* also been interpolated, it too, needed to be where it is found today, juxtaposed with an extant Josephan reference to a relevant historical personage more normally associated with the Baptist as portrayed by the various gospel accounts (in this case Herod Antipas).

If someone is intending to place a fraudulent piece of text into an existing manuscript in such a way as to avoid detection, the best way to do so, is to place it within the most appropriate pre-existing context. In short, if a forger wants to include something about, say, John the Baptist and the host text mentions, say, Herod Antipas, then by default, that is the appropriate place to weave in the forged material without raising too much suspicion. Again, if the forger wants to make mention of, say, Jesus and the host text makes mention of, say, Pontius Pilate, then that is the most logical place to merge in the spurious material.

As no other opportunities exist in the host text (other than these previously mentioned examples), then, by default, they become the *only* locations wherein an applicable interpolation may reside successfully. Thus, if the host text makes mention of Pontius Pilate *before* Herod Antipas the resultant interpolations (i.e. *TF* and *BP*), will not be placed in the same chronological order as their counterparts in the *NT*.

Thus, although the hypothetical interpolators, each in their own time, would have preferred to have ended up with a situation where the *BP preceded* the *TF,* this was not possible. Both interpolations were ultimately situated in the most convincing contexts offered solely by the *Antiquitie*s. As has been fully explained already, these two contexts (viz.: Pilate and Antipas) were not to be found in the same order as found in the *NT.*

This raises the question as to whether Eusebius, regardless of his status as

forger and/or opportunist, incorrectly recorded the order of placement for the *BP* and the *TF* solely due to his unconscious bias as a Christian–one who in his mind's eye automatically placed John the Baptist before the activities of Jesus due to his total dependence on the gospel tradition. If so, his comments about the placement of the two passages need not cause one too much concern, since his version of *Ant.* ultimately boasted largely the same structure and format as the version we have today.

Of course as has already been suggested, other permutations abound. It is also conceivable that Eusebius found the *BP* (regardless of its formulation), in its present place and then sought a believable context for his version of the *TF* applying the reasoning already described.

Regardless of who may have committed the original *BP* fraud, as a result of the primary needs of a suitable place to insert the interpolations, both the *TF* and the *BP* ended up where they appear today.

Assuming that there is any merit in the preceding arguments, then that would imply only one of two possibilities:

1. Eusebius had more than one copy of *Ant.* during his life and the placement of the *TF* and/or *BP* possibly differed in these copies.

2. The *TF* (whether amended or created by Eusebius or not) was situated (either by Eusebius and/or a previous author) exactly in the place it is now found (i.e. *Ant.* 18, 3, 3 / 63–64) and it is merely a misinterpretation of his comments in his later *Hist. eccl.* that gives rise to the belief that he refers to the *TF* as appearing *before* the *BP*. In short, the *TF* never did appear after the *BP*.

In this context, the latter possibility surely seems to be far more likely.

However, Doherty (2013), it would seem, favours the former possibility. Indeed, he considers the possibility that the *BP* may well have had some flexibility in terms of its position in copies of *Ant.* as further evidence for more general Christian interpolation over a period of time.

Doherty (2009: 561) believes that the question of what motivated Eusebius' possible interpolation(s) is revealed when one considers what he has to say in his *Hist. eccl.* I, 11. In this context, Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* I, 11 / 9[287]),

[287] English translation according to McGiffert (Tr.). 1890. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* 2nd Series, Vol. 1. Revised and edited for New Advent by Knight.

makes the following statement immediately after quoting the *BP* and the *TF*:

> Since an historian, who is one of the Hebrews themselves, has recorded in his work these things concerning John the Baptist and our Saviour, what excuse is there left for not convicting them [anti-Christian rhetoricians] of being destitute of all shame, who have forged the acts against them? But let this suffice here [my insertion for clarity].

It would certainly seem that Eusebius reveals his primary concern here–to even the score against what he considers to be previous "pagan" misrepresentation of Christianity. Doherty (2013) alerts his reader to a typical example of a source of irritation to Eusebius, namely the *Mem.* (*Memoranda*), published by the emperor Maximinus II (Daia)[288] in 311 C.E., whose coinage reveals that he worshipped *Sol Invictus.*[289]

He was also one of the last emperors to openly persecute Christians. His *Mem*. was alleged by the Romans to be the original and authentic *Acts of Pilate* in which the governor of Judea had apparently reported to Tiberius on his trial and crucifixion of Jesus. Maximinus was antagonistic towards John the Baptist as well as Jesus and openly supported the worship of other long-standing traditional deities. He personally believed that the Christian cult was responsible for such things as drought and pestilence–hence his eagerness to suppress them.

According to Eusebius, in the *Acts of Pilate* (*Mem.*) Pontius Pilate speaks about both Jesus as well as John (the Baptist) but in a very unsympathetic manner. Unfortunately this document has not survived, no doubt due to Christian censorship, based on Eusebius' reaction to it.

It should be viewed as quite serendipitous that the *TF* appeared precisely at a time when Eusebius requires ammunition to counter the claims of

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(http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250101.htm) in *New Advent* [Online]. Available: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250101.htm [26 July 2014].

[288] *Gaius Valerius Galerius Maximinus Daia Augustus* (270–313 C.E.).

[289] It is known that this particular religion was reformed and officially initiated in 274 C.E. by the Roman emperor Aurelian who made it an official religion alongside the traditional Roman cults. Hence, it initially was allocated the same status as that which Christianity would enjoy from 325 C.E. onwards. It was obviously a very popular religion and the last recorded inscription referring to this religion dates to 387 C.E. Even by the fifth century, this belief system was considered to be enough of a threat to Christianity, for Augustine to feel the need to preach against its adherents. Cf. Halsberghe, 1972: 155.

Maximinius II.

Doherty (2009: 561) asserts:

> Conveniently, then, the *Testimonium* has served Eusebius' need to counter and discredit this hostile publication "blackening" Jesus and John. What better situation could exist to justify Eusebius' principle of falsifying something in the interests of defending the faith against malicious and dishonest criticism?

Of particular importance is the possibility that a Christian interpolator is hardly likely to have forged the mention of John the Baptist and then not linked it in some way to Jesus. This is especially noteworthy when one considers the actual mention of John's use of baptism and not seen the obvious opportunity to link it to Christ's baptism by John. Further, the description of John's baptism ritual and its theological underpinning does not harmonise in all cases with a typically Christian understanding of the practice.

However, Doherty (2009: 562) seems to miss a very important issue here. He states "If it *was* genuine, this would have provided further incentive to fabricate one on Jesus to complement it, whether by Eusebius or someone previous."

This opinion does not seem to make much sense: Surely, the more likely reason why it was not employed as a direct link to Jesus is because it was possibly *not* genuine and was itself an interpolation. One could go further and speculate that because the *BP* and the *JP* may have been interpolated at the very same time or by the same person, the forger responsible never considered making a further reference to Jesus that needed to be linked to John as he had already created the *JP* and its reference to Jesus as, inter alia, the "Christ" and had already found a suitable place for it in *Ant.*?

Alternatively, had it been genuine (or an interpolation from an earlier century), perhaps the unorthodox description of the baptism ritual would have made it unsuitable to link Jesus at that point (i.e. sometime in the early fourth century C.E.), since it would have overtly contradicted the preferred message of a sinner dying to the world of sin and being reborn in Christ Jesus as preached by Eusebius?

Contradiction between the *NT* and the *BP*

Mason (2003: 157; 213–225) offers another intriguing insight:

According to the *BP*, Antipas arrested John primarily because he was responsible for causing civil unrest. However, the gospel accounts state that Antipas arrested John because he criticised his union with his brother's wife.

In this context, why did Josephus (assuming he was the author) not see John as a dangerous popular leader. As has already been ascertained in the case of the *TF*, elsewhere in *Ant.* such typical Jewish *arrivistes* are normally singled out for heavy criticism. But the author of the *BP* speaks of John in *positive* terms–even calling him a good and righteous leader. This in itself is patently un-Josephan in character.

All of this, taken together with Eusebius' remarks about the relative positioning of the John and Jesus passages in the text, makes it–at this stage of the argument–difficult to come to any clear decision about the authenticity of Josephus on John the Baptist.

5.4 Zindler's Proof: A Case Study

In this regard, the pioneering work of Zindler needs to be highlighted here as one of the more plausible arguments that may be employed when attempting to discount the authenticity of the *BP*.

Zindler (2003: 96) posits the argument that the *BP* was placed in *Ant.* by either a Jewish-Christian or "an apologist for one of the myriad 'heretical' sects which are known to have existed from the earliest periods of Christian history." He also correctly confirms that other written accounts of John the Baptist (i.e. other than those contained in the canonical gospels), must have once existed. In this regard, Zindler (2003: 97) reminds his readers that a non-gospel type of John the Baptist still boasts a major role in the Mandaean religion. Certainly, the religious scriptures of the Mandaeans (i.e. the *Genzā Rabbā*) contains the words of wisdom from their revered prophet *Yahya ibn Zakariyya* (i.e. John the Baptist). These are not found in any other extant source today.

In addition, there exists a brief reference to John the Baptist in *Gos. Thom.* 46. Jerome also cites a passage that contains a reference to John the Baptist as contained in the once extant Gospel of the Hebrews (cf. *DCP* [*Dialogus Contra Pelagianos* III. 2]).

Zindler (2003), gives five reasons why the *BP* is most likely a forgery, viz.:

First Reason: The *BP* disrupts the continuity of the main narrative:

If the *BP* (i.e. Section 2 [lines 116–119] from chapter 5 of book 18) is removed from the account as it presently appears, then Section 1 (i.e. the preceding Section [lines 109–115]) and Section 3 (i.e. the following Section [lines 120–129]), can now be read as a continuous, uninterrupted narrative, viz.:

> **End of Section 1 (line 115):**
>
> So Herod wrote about these affairs to Tiberius, who being very angry at the attempt made by Aretas, wrote to Vitellius to make war upon him, and either to take him alive, and bring him to him in bonds, or to kill him, and send him his head. This was the charge that Tiberius gave to the president of Syria.
>
> **Beginning of Section 3 (line 120):**
>
> So Vitellius prepared to make war with Aretas, having with him two legions of armed men; he also took with him all those of light armature, and of the horsemen which belonged to them, and were drawn out of those kingdoms which were under the Romans, and made haste for Petra, and came to Ptolemais.

This action clearly highlights the possibility that Section 2 (i.e. the *BP*) is a clumsy interpolation, as its presence disrupts the continuity of the narrative concerning the various interactions between Aretas IV, Herod Antipas, Tiberius and Vitellius.

Second Reason: The *BP* contradicts previous information written about the fortress of Macherus. In this regard, the fortress was first recorded in Section 1. Specifically, it is mentioned twice, once in line 111 and again in line 112.

In the *BP* (lines 116–119) the reader is informed that Herod Antipas sent John to the fortress of Macherus for execution. However, the preceding paragraph (i.e. Section 1) seems to stress that this fortress belonged to King Aretas IV who incidentally, was Antipas' father in law before becoming his mortal enemy.

Thus, even if it is somehow proven that under more normal conditions, Herod Antipas may have had access to this fortress, once he made an enemy of its legitimate owner (i.e. Aretas IV) he would hardly have been able to send his prisoner there for incarceration and subsequent execution.

As an aside, it should also be seen as highly suspicious, that the *BP* manages to amplify its tenuous relationship to the preceding text by the statement: "…he was sent … to Macherus, the castle I before mentioned…".

Third Reason: The *BP* contradicts the reasons for Herod Antipas' defeat at the hands of Aretas IV as stated in the same book:

The *BP* specifically informs the reader that God, displeased by Herod Antipas' atrocious treatment of the Baptist, allowed Aretas IV to have the upper hand in battle. However, Section 2 from Chapter 7 of Book 18 (line 255) states the following:

> And thus did God punish Herodias for her envy at her brother, and Herod also for giving ear to the vain discourses of a woman.

In this regard, Caligula banished Herodias together with her husband, Herod Antipas.

Fourth Reason John the Baptist is not mentioned in Josephus' earlier work (*War*), even when it discusses Herod Antipas.

Fifth Reason John the Baptist does not feature in the table of contents of the earlier Greek version of *Ant.* He only appears in the later, Latin translations.

If the *BP* is really a forgery (possibly based on some now long forgotten source), we are only left with the canonical gospels, the *Genzā Rabbā*, the Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of the Hebrews, for any knowledge about the Baptist. In addition, Zindler (2003) reminds us that the synoptic gospel accounts tend to emphasise the Baptist mostly in terms of quoted biblical prophecy and not as attempts to describe an actual historical personage. In this context, they use the literary descriptions of Elijah and his sayings as well as selected passages from the prophets to inform us about John the Baptist. Certainly, John is portrayed by the gospels as being an incarnation of Elijah.

One of the tempting conclusions to be drawn from this investigation at this early stage is that given the paltry historical evidence, there seems to be even less reason to believe that someone called John the Baptist existed than say Jesus.

5.5 R.M. Price's Proof: A Case Study

Another critique of this passage's claim to be authentic Josephan material is R.M. Price[290] who gives two very compelling reasons why we should be

[290] I.e. Robert M. Price.

highly suspicious of this passage.

First Reason

The first reason given by R.M. Price (2003: 103) concerns the obvious urgency of the author to "correct a sacramental interpretation" of John the Baptist's baptismal ritual:

> [John] commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism; for that the washing [with water] would be acceptable to him, if they made use of it, not in order to the putting away [or the remission] of some sins [only], but for the purification of the body; supposing still that the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand by righteousness.

R.M. Price points out that this is written in the context of the "here and now" rather than as some dispassionate account of a past event. In addition, R.M. Price asks why Josephus, as a practicing Jew, would even care about such subtle doctrinal issues (what he calls "sectarian theological hair-splitting…"), any more than say Gallio did in the *NT* (cf. Acts 18: 14–15)?[291] Given this valid observation, it is astounding how certain scholars can even begin to suggest that the *BP* contains *no* Christian interpolations and seemingly assume its "self-evident" authenticity.[292]

Meager, (1983: 37–38), who is also a Christian scholar, tries to rectify the situation by suggesting that Josephus could have drawn from the general knowledge of a Baptist cult in his own day. For some strange reason, R.M. Price seems to buy into this doubtful suggestion that such a cult actually existed. Regardless, even if we allow for such a possibility, R.M. Price (2003: 103) also maintains that he cannot visualise Josephus being that concerned with such issues and suggests that he would have "edited out such extraneous details."

In the context of R.M. Price's argument, this statement makes little or no sense because either Josephus relied on this avowed Baptist cult for his information or he did not. If the former is true than it means that here is

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[291] Acts 18: 14–15 states: "Just as Paul was about to speak, Gallio said to the Jews, 'If you Jews were making a complaint about some misdemeanor or serious crime, it would be reasonable for me to listen to you. But since it involves questions about words and names and your own law–settle the matter yourselves. I will not be a judge of such things.'"

[292] Cf. Rothschild, 2011: 257-58 n. 9, 260-61, 271.

some vital evidence for the possible historical existence of John the Baptist. If the latter is true, then it means that it is far more likely that the *BP* (and its implied import), is just a later Christian invention and interpolation. Again, if the latter possibility is correct, then Josephus knew absolutely nothing about a Baptist cult in his own time, regardless of whether or not it actually existed.

Second Reason

R.M. Price's second reason (2003: 103) for suspecting interpolation is akin to the observation made by Zindler and concerns the presence of a redactional seam. This has already been discussed and concerns the uncomfortable placement of the entire *BP* within supporting text whose logical flow is clearly interrupted.

However, R.M. Price's specific nuance on this observation, which is quite enlightening concerns the sentence that introduces the *BP*: "Now, some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God, and that very justly as a punishment of what he did against John."

R.M. Price suggests that this is a paraphrase of the genuine words of Josephus which now have been moved to the end of the passage, viz.: "Now, the Jews had an opinion that the destruction of this army was sent as a punishment upon Herod, as a mark of God's displeasure against him."

Even so, R.M. Price (2003: 104–105) still believes that John the Baptist was an historical figure and goes so far as to compare his alleged cult to the hypothetical Qumran sect.

5.6 New Evidence Regarding the Herodian Dynasty

Thanks, inadvertently to the recent (2010) mostly numismatic work undertaken specifically on the Herodian Dynasty by Kokkinos[293], some additional facts would seem to sway the argument of whether or not the *BP* was a Christian forgery.

To be clear, Kokkinos seems to accept the historicity of Jesus and John the Baptist. He also argues from the perspective of an individual who is primarily concerned with presenting a more accurate picture of the familial relationships within the Herodian dynasty. He is not primarily concerned

[293] Cf. Kokkinos, 2010.

with the historicity of Jesus and his associates. However, certain of his findings (especially his numismatic evidence) have inadvertently assisted in the interpolation debate.

Based on his complete re-evaluation of the Herodian dynasty Kokkinos (2010: 225) surmises that Herod Antipas was most likely born in c. 25 B.C.E. and if he did in fact execute John the Baptist it would have most likely occurred in 35 C.E. (i.e. on his sixtieth birthday). Kokkinos (2010: 231–232) has also identified Antipas' wife who was the daughter of Aretas IV of Nabataea. Based on numismatic evidence it transpires that her name was most likely Phasaelis. He also calculates that in c. 7–6 B.C.E. at the time of her marriage to Antipas, she would have been about 12 years old. Antipas divorced her in c. 33–34 C.E. Josephus (cf. *Ant.* 18, 5, 1 / 109) merely tells us that she was the daughter of Aretas IV but does not name her. It is also possible, but not certain, that no children were produced by this long union–certainly none that were recorded.

Regardless, Kokkinos (2010: 268) determines that on hearing of the death of his half-brother, Philip the Tetrarch, Antipas travelled to Rome in 34 CE. He did this to lay claim to his half-brother's territories–something he could now do as Philip and his wife Herodias most likely had no offspring.

As an aside, Kokkinos solves an old mystery here. Most theologians argue that due to the references to a "Philip" in Mark, Matt and Luke they have determined a seeming contradiction between the gospel accounts and that of Josephus. Kokkinos (2010: 223) states that the "stubborn insistence" of these scholars to conflate Herod II[294] with "'Herod-Philip'… is without value". Here he also cites Hoehner, 1972: 133–136 and Hanson, 1989: 79.

Before approaching Tiberius to make his petition, Antipas first went to negotiate with his late brother's widow (Herodias). Kokkinos speculates that Herodias acquiesced, subject to Antipas first divorcing Phasaelis and subsequently marrying her. Kokkinos stresses that this proposed union had more to do with politics than romance. Certainly, Herodias (c. 15 B.C.E.–after 39 C.E.) would have been some 49 years old by this time (i.e. 34 C.E.). Her motive was purely to guarantee that she remained aligned to a man who would ensure here continued exalted position and status.

Kokkinos (2010: 268) cites further evidence to support this conjecture when

[294] Kokkinos reclassifies Herod II as Herod III in his writings. This point need not detract from the argument cited. Cf. Kokkinos, 2010: 145, 195, 207, 208, 222, 223, 237, 245, 265–267, 268, 310, 340, 359, 364 and 365.

he refers to the fact that the pro-Nabataean party from Philip's former tetrarchy ultimately betrayed Antipas by siding with Phasaelis' father (Aretas IV)–an action that helped bring about Antipas' subsequent defeat. This event is recorded accurately by Josephus in his *Ant.* immediately preceding the *BP*.

It can be argued, that what is often overlooked in these debates is that *if* the *BP* is in any way authentic, it means that Josephus (regardless of the actual status of the *BP*), is writing about events that he believed happened between 37 and 41 C.E. Kokkinos' research confirms these dates. This does not fit at all well with the traditional Christian belief that Jesus died in c. 33 C.E. and sometime *after* John the Baptist had been supposedly executed. In fact, this issue is taken up by Kokkinos in quite a negative way, because he accepts the historicity of Jesus, he also sees it as necessary to push the date of the crucifixion forward to as late as 36 C.E. in order to preserve some gospel accuracy. Here again, is a wonderful example of an individual's worldview impinging on his reasoning. Had he no need to protect the crucifixion date as occurring after John the Baptist's death he would not have needed to have made this conjecture.

Ironically, instead of focusing on why they believe the *BP* is not a forgery, one would think that the more typically conservative and certainly fundamentalist scholars would be fighting extremely hard to *discredit* the *BP*. Indeed, if it is authentic extra-biblical/scriptural evidence, then it proves two things about John the Baptist:

1. He was more likely to be a *bona fide* historical personage; and

2. Contrary to the gospel accounts, he clearly still lived sometime *after* the Jesus episode.

If so, this fact would not only throw serious doubt on the gospel accuracy and chronology in general, but in addition would discredit certain of the key tenets of the Christian belief.

For example, such an outcome would show that John *did not*, inter alia, prophecy the coming of Christ or prepare the way for him, not to mention discrediting every utterance that Jesus is recorded as having spoken on all matters relating to either John or the topic of baptism.

Therefore, if one wants to retain the gospel accounts, as at the very least, based on some historical truth, then clearly, the *BP* is an obvious forgery.

If the gospel accounts are pure religious mythology then either John the Baptist most probably did not exist or his actions have been adulterated and redacted to suit a religious agenda. Either way, the *BP* is again shown up as fraudulent since it specifically highlights Josephus, as a practicing Jew, brought up as a Sadducee, being uncharacteristically concerned with advanced, perceptive, Christian-based, doctrinal issues concerning the role of baptism.

The only way that one can accept the *BP* as a valid historical account by Josephus is to discredit the gospels' accuracy and also blindly accept that Josephus was nothing short of being a practicing Christian with notions that were not only advanced for the time but practically prophetic in nature.

5.7 Origen as Prime Suspect

Given that Eusebius is unlikely to have been the instigator for the *BP* since Origen, who wrote several decades earlier, mentions that Josephus refers to John the Baptist, the task now is to try to determine at what point in history the interpolation was first made. Of course this does not rule out Eusebius as having a final redacting hand in the *BP*.

Apart from Origen, if we look at the extant writings of earlier Church fathers who made use of Josephus but do not quote the *TF*, we find that Justin Martyr (*TID*, XLIX; L and LXXXIV), mentions John the Baptist four times, purely in the context of preparing the way for Christ but he makes *no mention* of the *BP* and further, as he quotes from the New Testament and the *NT,* he has no need of Josephus.

Origen as suspected interpolator

To understand Origen's possible role in the creation of the *BP* it is first necessary to be aware of a number of interrelated issues which only come to light as a result of a critical reading of his *Contra Celsum*. This background information should be viewed as important in assisting one to understand the more likely raison *d'être* behind Origen's philosophical discourse whilst refuting Celsus' many anti-Christian claims.

Origen's Hellenistic worldview

As should be obvious, most (if not all) anti-Nicene apologists shared a similar belief in the efficacy of sympathetic magic. Indeed, they had various

interpretations concerning the tenets of the then evolving Christian dogma and associated Christology. They also seem to have taken for granted the existence of things like wizards, demons and evil spirits. This is especially true for Origen, who clearly accepts that things like sorcerers and magic undoubtedly exist. In addition, they pose a dangerous threat to an individual who seeks spiritual salvation. He also sees himself as having the important task of trying to counter Celsus' accusation (cf. *Cels.* I, 71[295]), that Jesus was not divine but a "wicked and God-hated sorcerer." Origen, like most of his peers, seems to understand the workings of his world in a typically Hellenistic[296] way. For example, he would affirm that water not only washes away dirt in the natural world but in the right context it will equally cancel out iniquity in the spiritual (supernatural) domain.

In *Cels.* IV, 62[297]. with reference to Plato, Origen explains:

> For the language in the Timæus, where it is said, "When the gods purify the earth with water, shows that the earth, when purified with water, contains less evil than it did before its purification". And this assertion, that there at one time were fewer evils in the world, is one which we make, in harmony with the opinion of Plato, because of the language in the Theætetus, where he says that evils cannot disappear from among men [my punctuation for greater clarity].

In the same vein, in *Cels.* II, 7[298], Origen gives his own take on the gospel account of Jesus washing his disciple's feet:

> [Jesus] who after supper laid aside His garments in the presence of His **disciples**, and, after girding Himself with a towel, and pouring water into a basin, proceeded to **wash the feet** of each **disciple**, and rebuked him who was unwilling to allow them to be **washed**, with the words, Except I **wash** you, you have no part with Me [my insertion and emphasis for clarity].

This passage reveals an obvious conflation of interpretation: The act of

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[295] English translation according to New Advent [Online]. Available: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250103.htm. [21 May 2014].

[296] Associative thinking and sympathetic magic remain common assumptions / practices even today. However, they received larger acceptance as having validity in the time of the Ante-Nicean writers.

[297] English translation according to Kirby, 2014b. *Origen. Contra Celsus* in *Early Christian Writings*. [Online]. Available: http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/origen161.html [23 July 2014].

[298] English translation according to Kirby, 2014b. *Origen. Contra Celsus* in *Early Christian Writings*. [Online]. Available: http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/origen161.html [23 July 2014].

washing the disciple's feet is seen as both symbolic as well as a sacrament which will ensure that the disciples literally adopt Christ-like qualities, including those of humility and compassion etc.

In *Cels.* III, 24[299], Origen explains how Christians, infused with the power of Christ can undertake all manner of supernatural activities:

> And some [converts] give evidence of their having received through this faith a marvellous power by the cures which they perform, revoking no other name over those who need their help than that of the God of all things, and of Jesus, along with a mention of His history. For by these means we too have seen many persons freed from grievous calamities, and from distractions of mind, and madness, and countless other ills, which could be cured neither by men nor devils.

Origen, also believes that his own deity is not averse to employing natural processes to enact supernatural outcomes. For example, in *Cels.* IV, 69[300] he refers to the biblical account where the Jewish deity "administers correction to the world, in purifying it by a flood or by a conflagration". It is important to remember, that in opposition to this, the more rational Celsus would most likely argue that natural events such as floods and conflagrations are not necessarily brought about by some divine need for retribution. Certainly Origen quotes Celsus as elucidating on this very issue in his *Cels.* IV, 11.

Again, in *Cels.* V, 48, whilst speaking on the efficacy of Jewish circumcision, Origen accepts the biblical account of an angel, intent on the annihilation of uncircumcised Jews, and who only allowed those Jews who were physically circumcised to remain unharmed. He also comments on the biblical tale of Zipporah who used a pebble to circumcise her son and then attributed the blood of circumcision as an effective agency against the avenging angel.

An attempt will be made here to demonstrate that Origen's worldview, which accepts the ability of mere mortals to influence the fabric of the supernatural spheres by the employment of religious/magical rituals/rites, clearly underscores his own perspectives as regards the Christian baptism

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[299] English translation according to Kirby, 2014b. *Origen. Contra Celsus* in *Early Christian Writings*. [Online]. Available: http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/origen161.html [23 July 2014].

[300] English translation according to Kirby, 2014b. *Origen. Contra Celsus* in *Early Christian Writings*. [Online]. Available: http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/origen161.html [23 July 2014].

rite; its workings and its efficacy. This is essential to ultimately establishing that Origen is the most likely candidate as creator of the *BP*.

Celsus' anti-Jewish sentiments

It is clear that Celsus (cf. *Cels.* II, 76) takes on the *persona* of a Jew in his now lost treatise (*TW*)[301] against Christianity. However, based on a reading of Origen's *Cels.* he must also have had a low opinion of Jews in general. This is one of the reasons why Origen needs to defuse Celsus' attempts (cf. *Cels.* I, 22), to discredit Christians by finding fault with the beliefs and practices of their perceived predecessors (i.e. the Jews). In *Cels.* I, 15, Origen strives to affirm the importance of Jewish culture when he makes mention of, inter alia, *Numenius* the Pythagorean, *Hermippus* and *Hecatæus* who variously praise the Jews for their antiquity and great piety as well as ascertaining that their deity was "incorporeal" in nature. Origen contrasts this more positive approach to Jews and Judaism with Celsus' recorded negative comments in *Cels.* I, 16[302]:

> I must express my surprise that Celsus should class the Odrysians, and Samothracians, and Eleusinians, and Hyperboreans among the most ancient and learned nations, and should not deem the Jews worthy of a place among such, either for their learning or their antiquity, although there are many treatises in circulation among the Egyptians, and Phœnicians, and Greeks, which testify to their existence as an ancient people, but which I have considered it unnecessary to quote.

Origen also berates Celsus for his seemingly anti-Semitic attitude in *Cels.* I, 16[303]:

> It seems, then, to be not from a love of truth, but from a spirit of hatred, that Celsus makes these statements, his object being to asperse the origin of Christianity, which is connected with Judaism. Nay, he styles the Galactophagi of Homer, and the Druids of the Gauls, and the Getæ; most learned and ancient tribes, on account of the resemblance between their traditions and those of the Jews, although I know not whether any of their

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[301] i.e. *True Word*.

[302] English translation according to Kirby, 2014b. *Origen. Contra Celsus* in *Early Christian Writings*. [Online]. Available: http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/origen161.html [23 July 2014].

[303] English translation according to Kirby, 2014b. *Origen. Contra Celsus* in *Early Christian Writings*. [Online]. Available: http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/origen161.html [23 July 2014].

> histories survive; but the Hebrews alone, as far as in him lies, he deprives of the honour both of antiquity and learning.

In *Cels.* II, 4, Origen falsely explains that the Jews of antiquity, whether they currently accepted it or not, prophesied the coming of Christ. Due to the fact that Celsus takes issue with Jewish trustworthiness, Origen needs to justify the notion that the Jewish scriptures genuinely foretold the coming of Christ and the ultimate demise of the rule of Mosaic Law. He also needs to justify the canonised gospels' narratives of John the Baptist (albeit being a Jew), preparing the way for Christ. After all, from Origen's perspective, many Jews were divinely inspired prophets of Christianity, viz.: Isaiah, Ezekiel and Elijah–the latter clearly serving as the Christian model[304] for John the Baptist:

> Now, certainly the introduction to Christianity is through the Mosaic worship and the prophetic writings…The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as it is written in the prophet Isaiah, Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who shall prepare Your way before You, which shows that the beginning of the Gospel is connected with the Jewish writings.

Origen's known acts of pious fraud

It must also be accepted that Origen, either by dint of personal conviction or blatant duplicity, is quite capable of academic dishonesty whenever there is a dearth of valid substantiation for his dubious opinions. One very good example of his deceit is witnessed in his account in *Cels.* I, 51, where he attempts to substantiate the then prevalent assumption that a particular cave in Bethlehem was Jesus' birth place! Origen needs this to be treated as *prima facie* evidence that Jesus was undeniably of divine birth. Furthermore, he only has recourse to the populist notion, still highly prevalent today, that if enough individuals believe something to be true then it probably is. Thus he needs to stress that Jesus' claimed birthplace is a certainty and still exists. He also needs to exaggerate the numbers of persons who accept this improbable notion. Further, he strives to expound that this self-same locale for the nativity event was divinely prophesied in Jewish antiquity. Accordingly, to assist his recapitulation, Origen (*Cels.* I, 51)[305], resorts to

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[304] Cf. Isa 35: 8, Isa 40: 3, Mal 3: 1, Mal 4: 5, Matt 3: 1–3, Mark 1: 2–5, Luke 3: 2–6 and John 1: 23.

[305] English translation according to Kirby, 2014b. *Origen. Contra Celsus* in *Early Christian Writings*. [Online]. Available: http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/origen161.html [23 July 2014].

expressing a blatant falsehood:

> Moreover, I am of opinion that, before the advent of Christ, the chief priests and scribes of the people, on account of the distinctness and clearness of this prophecy, taught that in Bethlehem the Christ was to be born. And this opinion had prevailed also extensively among the Jews;

Again, as has already been witnessed, Origen is not averse to alleging numerous Jewish prophecies that supposedly foretold the arrival Jesus as the Christ and undeniably, in *Cels.* III, 28[306], he typically makes the following ingenuous statement:

> …the whole Jewish people who were hanging in expectation of the coming of Him who was looked for, did, after the advent of Jesus, fall into a keen dispute with each other; and that a great multitude of them acknowledged Christ, and believed Him to be the object of prophecy.

These kinds of statements are quite false on many levels, yet Origen confidently employs them as if they were compelling evidence.

Christianity as a religion for the unlearned

In his *Cels.* I, 9, Origen accuses Celsus of stereotyping Christians as being wholly uncritical and relying on blind faith to justify their religious standpoint: Origen, (*Cels.* I, 9)[307] speaks to Celsus' contentions as follows:

> He [Celsus] next proceeds to recommend, that in adopting opinions we [Christians] should follow reason and a rational guide, since he who assents to opinions without following this course is very liable to be deceived. And he compares inconsiderate believers to Metragyrtæ, and soothsayers, and Mithræ, and Sabbadians, and to anything else that one may fall in with, and to the phantoms of Hecate, or any other demon or demons. For as among such persons are frequently to be found wicked men, who, taking advantage of the ignorance of those who are easily deceived, lead them away whither they will, so also, he says, is the case among Christians. And he asserts that certain persons who do not wish either to give or receive a reason for their belief, keep repeating, "Do not examine, but believe!" and, "Your faith will

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[306] English translation according to Kirby, 2014b. *Origen. Contra Celsus* in *Early Christian Writings*. [Online]. Available: http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/origen161.html [23 July 2014].

[307] English translation according to Kirby, 2014b. *Origen. Contra Celsus* in *Early Christian Writings*. [Online]. Available: http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/origen161.html [23 July 2014].

> save you!" And he alleges that such also say, "The wisdom of this life is bad, but that foolishness is a good thing!" [My insertions for greater clarity].

It is evident that Origen feels the need to employ what he considers to be sound, logical reasoning to successfully counter Celsus' indictments of typical Christian credulity. However, as has been determined already, he also accepts the power/reality of sympathetic magic, evil spirits and demons.

One of Origen's principle concerns is that Celsus consistently presents Jesus as an evil sorcerer, whom only the very guileless would consider to be a worker of divine miracles. In addition, Celsus compares Jesus negatively to other alleged wonder-working, god-men (e.g. the Bacchæ [*Cels.* II, 34]; Dioscuri, Hercules, Æsculapius and Dionysus [*Cels.* III, 22]). In this context, Origen desperately needs to find convincing evidence to successfully elevate Jesus far above any other comparable individuals. In short, he needs to be able to corroborate that the miraculous accounts recorded on behalf of Jesus were not due to trickery, deceit or invention. Origen needs to convince someone like Celsus that Jesus' teaching, actions and deeds were primary, tangible, evidence of his highest divine authority as God (as claimed by Christians).

Origen also needs to prove that many Christians (who might really be as unlearned and unsophisticated as Celsus has affirmed), were still correct/justified in their chosen belief. Origen needs to be able to demonstrate to someone like Celsus that Christian conversion was a divine event and not mere wishful thinking or ingenuous self-delusion. His preferred approach to solving this conundrum is revealed in (*Cels.* I, 9)[308]:

> But since the course alluded to is impossible, partly on account of the necessities of life, partly on account of the weakness of men, as **only a very few individuals devote themselves earnestly to study**, what better method could be devised with a view of **assisting the multitude**, than that which was delivered by Jesus to the heathen? And let us inquire, **with respect to the great multitude of believers, who have washed away the mire of wickedness in which they formerly wallowed, whether it were better for them to believe without a reason,** and (so) to **have become reformed and improved in their habits**, through the belief that men are chastised for sins, and honoured for good works or **not to have allowed themselves to be converted on the strength of mere faith**, but (to have waited) until they

[308] English translation according to Kirby, 2014b. *Origen. Contra Celsus* in *Early Christian Writings*. [Online]. Available: http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/origen161.html [23 July 2014].

> could give themselves to a thorough examination of the (necessary) reasons [my emphases].

What is alluded to, is that Almighty God foresaw the need to simplify matters if he was going to succeed in his mission of Christianising the known world. He needed to make things easier for potential convertees. In this regard, Origen stresses the overriding benefits of Christian baptism as a sympathetic magical rite which successfully overrides any other consideration determined by philosophical debate. Unquestionably, it seems as though Origen is equating the contemplated evaluation of even a well-educated individual who ultimately comes to accept Christ (i.e. based on wisdom alone), with the spiritual conversion of any individual who is the beneficiary of the divine power of the rite of a Christian baptism.

The efficacy of Christian baptism

Baptism is not only seen here as some symbolic way to wash away sins or exemplify the believer's passage into a new spiritual life. For Origen, any individual (irrespective of their rationale or level of intellect), once baptised, will exhibit behaviour patterns that differ significantly from those that they displayed before their baptism. This is the tangible evidence that Origen wants to hold up to Celsus. For example, by the power of Christ, the convertees will reveal that they are now virtuous, righteous and godly. Baptised Christians literally "improve their habits" regardless of their education or intellectual prowess. Origen does not even bother to give substantiated examples of this claimed change in behaviour patterns but merely states it as a fact.

In his *Cels.* I, 64[309], Origen elucidates through means of generalities and sweeping statements, the changes that occur during the conversion process replete with baptism rite:

> For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that **the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost**, which He shed upon us richly, we became such as we are [my emphasis].

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[309] English translation according to Kirby, 2014b. *Origen. Contra Celsus* in *Early Christian Writings*. [Online]. Available: http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/origen161.html [23 July 2014].

Another way of understanding Origen's point of view, is to regard the act of baptism as having exactly the same weight as a rational decision to convert to Christianity. Origen tries to subtly suggest that even an unlearned person receives new life in Christ; even if he/she does not fully understand the finer philosophical points of the Christian conviction. Thus, an individual's chosen faith is given authority by the Christian rite of baptism because it results in him/her literally giving over his/her life to Christ/God. In this regard, the rebirth is not only symbolic but actual. The baptism rite marks the very moment when the converted person accepts Christ into his/her life. In this way, Origen develops an argument, based on sympathetic magic, that can be employed against Celsus' more logical and rational observations.

In *Cels.* III, 48[310], Origen confirms that anyone is welcome to become a Christian whilst countering Celsus' claim that only unintelligent people convert to Christianity:

> … let him who wills [i.e. to be converted] come to us instructed, and wise, and prudent; and none the less, if any one be **ignorant and unintelligent, and uninstructed and foolish**, let him also come: for it is these whom the Gospel promises to cure, when they come, by rendering them **all worthy of God** [my insertion and emphasis for clarity].

Origen believes that once baptised, the individual concerned literally receives and/or internalises Christ/God. As a result, the baptised individual has no choice but to subsequently act in accordance with Christian/Godly principles. Origen confirms this benefit of Christian baptism (which is demonstrated by his claimed tangible changed behaviour patterns) in his *Cels.* I, 9[311]:

> For it is manifest that, (on such a plan), all men, with very few exceptions, would not obtain this (amelioration of conduct) which they have obtained through a simple faith, but would continue to remain in the practice of a wicked life. Now, whatever other evidence can be furnished of the fact, that it was not without divine intervention that the philanthropic scheme of Christianity was introduced among men, this also must be added. For a pious man

[310] English translation according to Kirby, 2014b. *Origen. Contra Celsus* in *Early Christian Writings*. [Online]. Available: http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/origen161.html [23 July 2014].

[311] English translation according to Kirby, 2014b. *Origen. Contra Celsus* in *Early Christian Writings*. [Online]. Available: http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/origen161.html [23 July 2014].

> will not believe that even a physician of the body, who restores the sick to better health, could take up his abode in any city or country without divine permission, since no good happens to men without the help of God.

Related to this, in his *Cels.* I, 46, Origen explains that we should be assured of Christ's divinity due to his miracles and the fact that his disciples, filled with his power, also performed miracles. Most important of all, he cites both the disciples of Christ as well as contemporary Christian's willingness to face the threat of death for their beliefs as evidence of the truth of Christ's teaching. Origen also claims (again without real substantiation), a Christian's ability to cast out demons, foretell the future and cure illness.

The exploitation of Josephus

With the aforementioned contexts in mind, it is possible to see that one of the more problematic issues for Origen was the effective neutralisation, inter alia, of Celsus' derogatory opinions of Jews in general, unlearned Christian naivety, the Christian claim of Jesus' divinity and his supposed virgin birth. This latter claim also appears to have been supported by the gospel account of John the Baptist's baptism of Jesus. This is because at this event, God (the Father) is recorded as confirming Jesus' divine paternity.[312]

The various issues under review thus far, seem to be interrelated in the gospel account of a righteous and pious Jew (John the Baptist) performing the Christian baptism ritual on the Son of God, replete with the bodily appearance of the Holy Spirit (in the form of a dove) and the heavenly voice of God the Father.

Based on Origen's various comments in his *Cels.* (cf. *Cels.* I, 37; *Cels.* I, 40) it can be safely determined that Celsus considered this whole Baptist narrative to be a "fiction" and also takes issue with the possibility that it was the Jews who prophesised Christ. He also disputes that the Jews wrote the gospels and thus "invented" Christianity. Therefore, ostensibly, Origen needs to prove, to Celsus, inter alia, the following points:

[312] Cf. Matt 3: 13–17; Mark 1: 9–11; and Luke 3: 21–23.

1. Jesus is really the son of Almighty God who brought him (conception) into the physical world (incarnation) through the medium of a virgin woman;

2. The Holy Spirit appeared bodily (incarnate) as a dove;

3. The Divine Voice from Heaven (God the Father) actually occurred at the baptism event;

4. Christian baptism had real spiritual efficacy and resulted in its recipient adopting godly qualities;

5. A person who displays Christ like/godly behaviour subsequent to a Christian baptism is evidence of Jesus' divine status; and

6. The gospel accounts of, inter alia, the baptism event were wholly true.

The first recorded reference made specifically to the *BP* was made by Origen. In this regard it is most important to take note that in his *Cels.* I, 47, Origen has the real need to defend the then current form of the Christian practice of baptism. Below is a transcript of the specific passages which refers to John the Baptist in *Cels.* I, 47:[313]

> I would like to say to Celsus, who represents the Jew as accepting somehow John as a Baptist, who baptized Jesus, that the existence of John the Baptist, **baptizing for the remission of sins**, is related by one who lived no great length of time after John and Jesus. For in the 18th book of his Antiquities of the Jews, Josephus bears witness to John as having been a Baptist, and as **promising purification to those who underwent the rite** [my emphases].

What is even more telling, given that we have already witnessed the likelihood that Origen forged the *JP* is that the above quoted passage from *Cels.* I, 47 immediately precedes Origen's reference to Josephus as the source for his reference to James! Thus we have evidence here that both suspected interpolations are literally referenced in tandem in the self-same passage.

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[313] English translation according to Kirby, 2014b. *Origen. Contra Celsus* in *Early Christian Writings*. [Online]. Available: http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/origen161.html [23 July 2014].

We have already witnessed in *Cels.* I, 47, Origen's reference to Josephus' assumed mention of James the Just (i.e. the *JP*). We have also seen how throughout his *Cels.* Origen iterates his particular take on the rite of Christian baptism and the subsequent Christ-directed changes that take place in an individual's behaviour patterns. However, when it comes to his account of the baptism of Christ, Origen seems (on the surface) to be neglecting a golden opportunity to talk to his hobbyhorse. Indeed, in *Cels.* I, 47, Origen merely states that John the Baptist baptised "for the remission of sins …promising purification to those who underwent the rite." However, concurrent to this brief comment, Origen also makes a direct reference to Josephus.

In one sense, Josephus merely serves as an independent witness to back up his assertions on a very superficial level. However, if the reader then bothers to actually turn to Josephus' *BP* (i.e. *Ant.* 18, 5, 2 / 116–119), he/she will most "conveniently" discover a lengthy, reiteration of those very issues that disprove some of Celsus' claims. In this regard, (assuming that Origen perpetrated this forgery), he manages to legitimise Josephus as an independent author of the substantiation by the link to the castle of Macherus and Herod Antipas. Then, he has Josephus confirm (on his behalf) the following details:

1. John the Baptist may have been a Jew, but he was not only a proven "good man", he also actively worked towards making other Jews "exercise virtue" and practice righteous behaviour and "piety towards God";

2. John the Baptist did not practice, what some may imagine was some form of traditional Jewish purification ritual; he practiced essentially, what was for Origen, a Christian baptism which ensured that the convertee subsequently engaged in a divinely directed, behavioural change, that embodied piety, righteousness and godly virtues. Specifically, John the Baptist enacted a religious rite which undertook two interdependent actions:

    - the remission of (some) sins; and

    - the purification of the body (supposing that the soul was purified beforehand by righteousness).

The latter two points are nothing more than embellishments of the very concepts that Origen had been trying to sell to his reader in his *Cels.* and particularly *Cels* I, 47.

It is clear that within the context of his argument with Celsus, Origen also needs hard evidence to convince his reader that James was the brother of Jesus–and more importantly–Jesus was already known to be the Christ as early as c. 68 C.E.;

For convenience, the pertinent passage from the *BP* is reproduced below:

> [John the Baptist] commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism; for that the washing [with water] would be acceptable to him, if they made use of it, not in order to the putting away [or the remission] of some sins [only], but for the purification of the body; supposing still that the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand by righteousness [my insertion for clarity].

By referring to Josephus at this juncture, Origen literally kills two birds with one stone. He proves his theological point by supposedly referring to a reliable, non-partisan and objective historian (i.e. one who did not accept Jesus as the messiah). In addition, this impartial witness was "one who lived no great length of time after John and Jesus".

Josephus, who as we have already seen would not have known, let alone been bothered by such specific doctrinal minutiae is clearly made to say what Origen would ideally need an independent, historically valid, witness to say. Here Josephus (*Cels.* I, 47), clearly seems to confirm Origen's point of view.

The fact that both the *JP* and the *BP* are mentioned in the same passage penned by Origen strengthens this possibility. It is simply too much of a coincidence that in one paragraph this apologist manages to point to two supporting pieces of evidence, written by the same author, to so conveniently substantiate so many aspects of his debate with Celsus. The fact that both of these "substantiations" have independently been recognised as suspicious in nature and candidates for total interpolation, based on other evidence, is also enthralling. The obvious conclusion that must be made here is that Origen is the prime candidate for two of the three interpolations under review.

5.8 Chapter Five Summary

The following points, especially when taken collectively, mitigate against the *BP* being in any way an authentic Josephan text:

If Josephus wrote the *BP,* then it follows that he also:

1. contradicts the gospels as regards the date of John the Baptist's activities;

2. contradicts the gospels as regards the reason for John the Baptist's arrest;

3. shows remarkable familiarity and theologically advanced insights into Christian-based baptism rites;

4. contradicts his statements about the range and scope of Jewish-based cults in the Holy land due to failure to mention any other Jewish sect even remotely connected with a Baptist cult or Christianity[314];

5. contradicts his avowed position on the dangers of Jewish religious upstarts;

6. describes an impossible/contradictory situation at the fortress at Macherus;

7. contradicts his previously stated reasons for Gods' divine vengeance against Antipas;

8. seriously disrupts the literary flow of his narration;

9. fails to mention John the Baptist in his earlier work and in the same context (i.e. *Judean War*); and

10. fails to mention John the Baptist in his table of contents (*Ant.*).

Based on the arguments cited thus far, only the following debateable point supports the *BP* being in some way authentic:

[314]This assumes that the *TF* is an interpolation.

Only a non-Christian like Josephus would have:

1. placed the *NT* events in the wrong order.

However, the latter point can be easily countered by the need of the interpolator to find a suitable context within *Ant.* for his forgery. Although, normally, an interpolator would have preferred to have had the *BP* precede the *TF,* ultimately these interpolations needed to be placed within suitable contexts situated within the *Antiquities.* As the only suitable places were not in the correct chronological order this gives the false appearance of Josephus having placed the events of Christian import in the wrong order.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Introduction

This investigation set out to determine to what degree the three passages (i.e. the *Testimonium Flavianum*, *James the Just Passage* and *John the Baptist Passage*) and which appear in Josephus' *Antiquitates Judaicae* may be deemed to be authentic and/or historically reliable.

To this end, five interrelated issues needed to be resolved, viz.:

1. Apart from the possibilities inherent in the writings of Josephus, are there in fact any credible, extra-biblical/scriptural references to an historical Jesus, John the Baptist or James the Just?

2. How indebted are contemporary, leading biblical scholars (especially within the context of the interpolation debate), to their preferred worldview when it comes to engaging in supposedly impartial, constructive and meaningful academic discourse? In short, are their conclusions in any way, reliable or trustworthy?

3. Is it in any way possible that Josephus (based on an in-depth analysis of his own worldview and historical context), would have known and/or written about Jesus, John the Baptist or James the Just?

4. Is there any reliable, hard evidence that specifically anti-Nicean Christian writers in general and/or independently would have needed to invent extra-biblical references to Jesus, John the Baptist or James the Just?

5. Is it possible to determine the identity of the interpolators should this conclusion become evident?

6.2 Credible, Extra-Biblical/Scriptural References

Based on the available evidence (cf. Chapter Two) it is perfectly clear that, apart from scriptural texts, no artefact, archaeological evidence or verifiable written document exists that can support in any way the historical existence of Jesus, John the Baptist or James the Just. This confirmation is important since it establishes a reason why both Christian apologists and polemicists, on occasion, felt it necessary to resort to pious fraud–especially between the second and fourth centuries of the Common Era.

6.3 Leading Biblical Scholars' Preferred Worldview

Although many conservative scholars do attempt to give the illusion of impartiality and broad-mindedness their findings invariably serve merely to add support to their confessions of faith. Some, like Meier (1991: 4–6) are honest enough to admit this. He for one believes that the most important "hedge against rampant subjectivism" is an honest acknowledgement of one's worldview–something he describes as "one's own personal stance, one's own point of view and background". His solution, however, is entirely self-serving. After acknowledging (1991: 5), that there is "no Switzerland of the mind in the world of Jesus research" he goes on to justify why he should not have to be beholden to absolute objectivity. Here, he feels that this is not even attainable. This is quite so, but to not even attempt to maintain impartiality as an ideal is also not the answer. Meier (1991: 6), as one of the most respected and leading scholars in his field, seems to think that not having some firm point of view will devolve into what he calls "total relativism". This is the sentiment of someone who has not embraced the linguistic paradigm, someone who still believes in a nineteenth century concept of consciousness. Lastly, he honestly confesses his faith and simultaneously justifies how far he will go rationally. Nonetheless he also makes it clear that he will not cross the line that leaves him without a committed standpoint.

Meier is not alone. We have already witnessed throughout this research the attitudes of all conservative scholars. They cannot and will not cross a certain boundary in their deliberations. Those that do would have to give up their faith.

Only where rationality does not challenge a particular confession of faith, might the deliberations of conservative scholars still serve a useful albeit, limited purpose.

6.4 The *TF*, *JP* and *BP* as Forgeries

Apart from the three suspected interpolations, all of Josephus' surviving works give the impression that he had never heard about Jesus, John the Baptist, James the Just or indeed Christianity in any form whatsoever.

There are also several good reasons to doubt that he would have wanted to record anything about these three persons even if he had known about them.

Josephus makes mention of a number of individuals who each in their way played some small or decisive role in the lead-up to the ultimate destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

Many of these individuals employed religion/sympathetic magic and/or the credulity of the Jewish people to obtain their goals. Some of them also claimed the power of prophecy and/or divinely-backed miracles. In almost all cases, Josephus condemns their activities roundly. What is most telling is that only in three cases does Josephus speak positively about a Jewish parvenu's religious/spiritual mission, viz.: Jesus and John the Baptist. This in itself should be considered highly questionable given that these are two of the three passages suspected of interpolation.

The *Testimonium Flavianum*

The *TF* contradicts its situation within the context of its encapsulating passages. Most significantly of all, it also manages to serve as a highly detailed confession of the Christian faith in only 89 words. Unless Josephus was a practicing Christian he could never have written this confession.

The *TF* (regardless of whether one only wishes to acknowledge the artificially created shorter version) contradicts Josephus' other statements in his works.

As discussed already, the notion that the present form of the *TF* is based on an earlier shorter and more negative version is contrived and the result of wishful thinking aimed at preserving an irrational belief system. The task of establishing a feasible core of text attributable to Joseph in the *TF* is well-nigh impossible. The claim by scholars (like Meier) that once obvious Christian interpolation is removed; the "remaining" words must be genuine since they can be found elsewhere in Josephus' works defies credulity.

It is also significant that up until the early 1950s few doubted the total forgery hypothesis. It is only since that time onwards that Christian scholars

(suddenly aware of the threat to their need for an historical Jesus) desperately needed to preserve some credibility as far as the *TF* was concerned. Most if not all of their arguments are forced and based on personal conviction and not sound logic.

One such example of this typically strained reasoning involves the repeated and ridiculous claim that it would be quite difficult to duplicate the writing style of Josephus.

This can be safely discounted. A textual forgery can be very easily accomplished with minimal knowledge and training. A text can be removed, a name or a word can be altered and the literary style remains intact. In point of fact, given the wealth of examples supplied by Josephus himself in his extensive writings, literally anyone can lift his ready formulated sentences and re-appropriate meaning as they see fit.

A more experienced forger would also not risk detection by placing obviously impossible concepts into the mouth of a reputable author. This is the very reason why more amateurish forgeries are so easy to detect as in the case of Tacitus' reference to Pontius Pilate and an individual called "Christ".

On this topic it has been clearly shown that the real issue under discussion is not the manner in which the interpolation was executed. Rather, it is necessary to establish the reasons why a particular interpolation was *needed*. Once we have ascertained the motives for the forgery, the "how" becomes self-evident and immediately addresses any issues concerning, inter alia, content and style.

The James Passage

As has already been summarised, there are numerous reasons why the *JP* should not be considered to be an authentic document. The principle reasons include the following:

1. The *JP* is the only extra-scriptural reference to James the Just in existence;

2. Origen quotes the *JP* practically verbatim–even inappropriately referring to a Jewish male as "the brother" of another individual;

3. Origen falsely states that Josephus attributed the destruction of the

Temple to James' death;

4. The encapsulating text fails to clarify the reasons for James' trial and execution; and

5. If the Christian tradition is to be taken as correct then the historical context for James' death is out by at least eight years.

The Baptist Passage

As has been summarised, there are numerous reasons why the *BP* should not be considered as an authentic document. The principle reasons include the following:

1. The *BP* contradicts its situation within the context of its encapsulating passages. The only possible link between it and the preceding text is the reference to Macherus and Herod. These references seem to be there merely to create the illusion of authenticity. However, the historical realities clearly prohibit the possibility of Macherus being employed by Herod for the purposes of incarcerating a prisoner at the time indicated;

2. The *BP* contradicts the gospels as regards the time period of John the Baptist's activities;

3. The *BP* contradicts the gospels as regards the reason for John the Baptist's arrest;

4. The *BP* displays remarkable familiarity and theologically advanced insights into Origen-supported, Christian-based, baptism rites; and

5. The *BP* contradicts Josephus' previously stated reasons for Gods' divine vengeance against Antipas.

6.5 Ante-Nicean Christian Need for Extra-Biblical References

Based on the confirmations established in Chapter Two, it is evident that a wealth of forgery existed between the second and fourth century alone. It is quite obvious that there must have been a real need for extra-biblical proofs by early Christian apologists.

Based on the analyses undertaken in this research, there are a number of plausible reasons why an apologist or polemicist would have needed to create a false literary source.

For example, as we have seen, a forgery might be made (as is more likely in the case of Origen), to win an argument against non-Christian polemic. Whereas for Eusebius the incentive, in addition to needing substantiated evidence to settle a dispute, he also, on occasion, needs proof for the existence of an historical Jesus. This latter motive is the principal one that now concerns most contemporary Christian scholars.

It is certain, based on the historical contexts recreated in this book, that sometime in the late third and early fourth century onwards, it became increasingly evident to Ante-Nicean Christian apologists that there was a dearth of information concerning an historical Jesus. Up until that time, most writers–non-Christian and Christian alike–merely assumed that Jesus was an historical fact. It was only when individuals started to look for what they imagined would be freely available and abundant evidence that they realised they were consistently coming up short. They desperately needed to produce this evidence. They even resorted to quoting non-Christian sources to give credibility to their propaganda. Ironically, these cited texts were written by individuals who themselves had no evidence for an historical Jesus but merely referred to him because they trusted the then prevailing Christian tradition.

Indeed, at the time, a non-Christian polemicist would not have had any reason to question Jesus' historicity. They were far more interested with proving that Jesus was no more special than any other reported wonder-worker or wizard. In short, they merely wanted to preserve the more traditional deities and discount Jesus' claimed miracles as being in any way divine. In an age that believed in the power of sympathetic magic, it was accepted by both Christian and non-Christian alike, that important individuals could be god-like and that supernatural forces of all descriptions could empower an individual to work magical effects and nature miracles.

The fact that such blatant forgeries could be produced by Christian apologists also gives some insight into how the Christian faith was possibly manufactured/developed. In this latter regard it would seem that a more concerted investigation is needed to ascertain how a religion may be created by borrowing key elements from other creeds. It also demands greater clarity regarding the more plausible evolution of Judaism from the time of the Maccabees via Paul's gnosticism and the Gentile and Hellenistic

worldviews to the nascent Christian cults of the second and third century of the Common Era.

6.6 The Identity of the Interpolators

Testimonium Flavianum

In the case of the *TF*, no early Christian scholar or apologist makes mention of anything vaguely similar until the specific quotations of Eusebius. Again, the contents of the *TF* conveniently assist Eusebius in his difficult task of proving to his reader that Jesus was not a conjurer or wizard but a divine individual–a deity–who performed real miracles. In addition, he was a divine teacher who attracted both Greek and Jew alike. Although not conclusive in its own right, the remarkable coincidence that most of the assumed writer's trope contained in the *TF* bears close resemblance to that found in Eusebius' works, simply adds more weight to the case. In a comparison between conservative and sceptical conclusions, there is no doubt that the validity and merit of the sceptical findings far outweigh the conservative ones.

Eusebius has been a prime suspect for well over 600 years now and based on this present survey–which proves beyond reasonable doubt that he was capable of gross dishonesty–he must remain the best and sole candidate.

Baptist Passage and James Passage

Origen was not only the first person to make reference to both the *James Passage* and the *John the Baptist Passage*; he also needed their contents to justify his arguments against Celsus' anti-Christian polemic. The assumption that he was the sole individual who manufactured these two interpolations is obvious.

The fact that he also manages to refer to both suspected interpolations in the same passage (one is practically quoted verbatim) is significant. The fact that Origen manages to present Josephus as an independent, well-informed, reliable witness, who ostensibly uses his "own words" to substantiate his own assertion that John the Baptist baptised in accord with third-century Christian practices, as well as simultaneously confirming that Jesus was known to be the messiah whilst still alive, should also be viewed as more than accidental.

Previously, Origen did not feature quite so prominently as an obvious

originator of specific interpolations in *Ant.* Due to the present survey, apart from any doubt that he was, on occasion, quite capable of flagrant deceit, he must now be seriously considered the most likely candidate for the creation of both the *JP* as well as the *BP*.

6.7 The Final Verdict Based on the Evidence

The findings from this investigation confirm that logical, rational debate cannot be maintained whilst adhering to any irrational belief structure. Intellectual endeavour for the maintenance of any dogma cannot and should not be equated with objective scientific enquiry.

This examination also confirms that the three suspected interpolations as found in Josephus' *Antiquities* must be seen to be wholly fraudulent. It also strongly advocates the most likely authorship for these three acts of pious fraud, viz.:

1. Origen must be considered to be the prime suspect for the creation of both the *JP* and the *BP* in c. 248 C.E. This occurred a few years before his death; and

2. Eusebius must be considered to be the sole suspect for the creation of the *TF*. In this scenario, he first composed a version of the *TF* in c. 312–318 C.E. for his *Dem. ev.* Later, he refined it sometime between 313 and 323 C.E in his *Hist. eccl.*

As a consequence, it is clearly demonstrated that, to date, outside of the New Testament, Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, no valid written source, artefact or archaeological evidence exist to substantiate the historical existence of Jesus, John the Baptist or James the Just.

In addition, this investigation has produced a greater understanding and clarification of the existing literature as well as the underlying reasons for the current impasse in the interpolation debate. It has clearly shown that the weight of the current argument lies firmly on the side of inauthenticity.

The finding also should serve as an impetus to re-evaluate what is currently understood about Ancient Roman perceptions of not only Christianity but other faiths during the late Republic, Julio-Claudian period and beyond. There is evidence that recorded/interpolated Christian political aims and general bias may very well have left modern historians with a distorted view

of religious practices and associated Græco-Roman responses and attitudes in the first two to three centuries of the Common Era.

Finally, this investigation successfully exonerates and confirms important aspects of the pioneering work of such eminent scholars as, inter alia, Carrier, Doherty, Leidner, Mason, Olson, R.M. Price, Wells and Zindler.

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